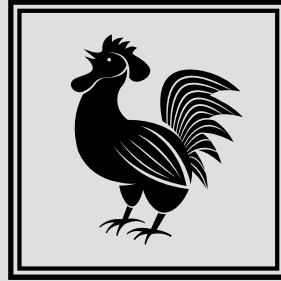
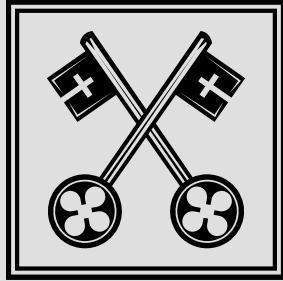


SYMBOLS

The Holy Apostles & Evangelists

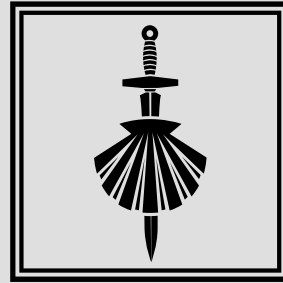
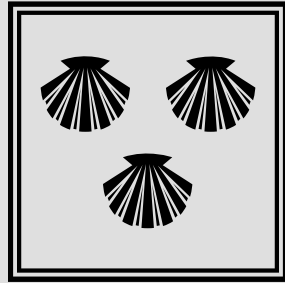
Peter



The most common symbol for St. Peter is that of two keys crossed and pointing up. They recall Peter's confession and Jesus' statement regarding the Office of the Keys in Matthew, chapter 16. A rooster is also sometimes used, recalling Peter's denial of his Lord.

Another popular symbol is that of an inverted cross. Peter is said to have been crucified in Rome, requesting to be crucified upside down because he did not consider himself worthy to die in the same position as that of his Lord.

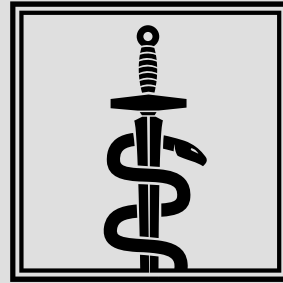
James the Greater



Three scallop shells are used for St. James, with two above and one below. Another shows a scallop shell with a vertical sword, signifying his death at the hands of Herod, as recorded in Acts 12:2.

Tradition states that his remains were carried from Jerusalem to northern Spain where he was buried in the city of Santiago de Compostela, the capital of Galicia. As one of the most desired pilgrimages for Christians since medieval times together with Jerusalem and Rome, scallop shells are often associated with James as they are often found on the shores in Galicia. For this reason the scallop shell has been a symbol of pilgrimage.

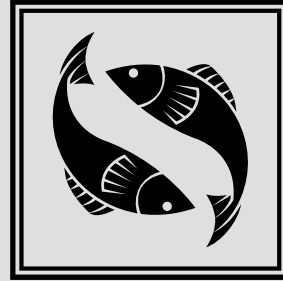
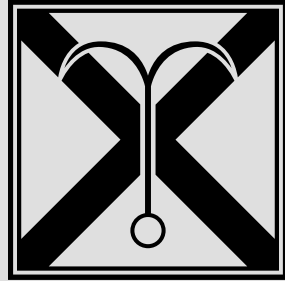
John



When shown as an apostle, rather than one of the four evangelists, St. John's symbol shows a chalice and a serpent coming out from it. Early historians and writers state that an attempt was made to poison him, but he was spared before being sent to Patmos.

A vertical sword and snake are also used in some churches. The sword, symbolizing of the "Sword of the Spirit", and the snake, recalling man's sin, show the power of God's Word over sin.

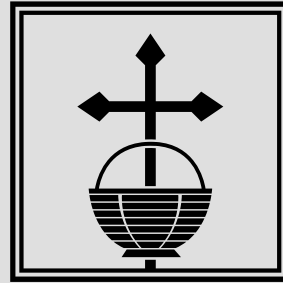
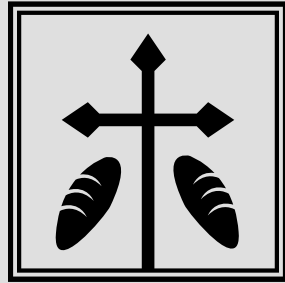
Andrew



St. Andrew's symbol is most often that of a cross saltire that reaches the border of the frame. Elements of his occupation as a fisherman are often added on top of this cross, such as a large boat hook or an anchor. He is believed to have died while preaching the Gospel in Greece on a cross like this. The most popular example of this symbol is found on Scotland's flag, since St. Andrew is the county's patron saint.

Two inverted or crossed fishes are also used to signify his original occupation and his call to become a fisher of men.

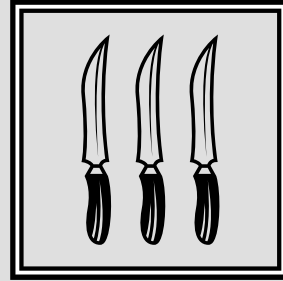
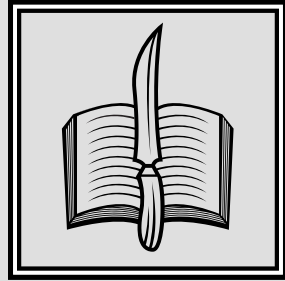
Philip



A tall, slender cross and two loaves of bread are used for St. Philip. This recalls his remark when Jesus fed the multitude in John 6:7. A bread basket is sometimes substituted for the loaves of bread and a “tau” cross for the more traditional latin cross.

After his mission work in Galatia and Phrygia, Andrew is said to have suffered a very cruel death by scourging, stoning, crucifixion, and ultimately by being run through with a spear.

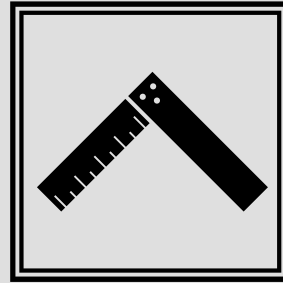
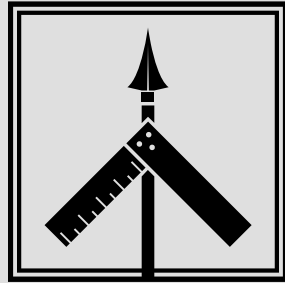
Bartholomew



St. Bartholomew, possibly the same person as Nathanael in John 1:45-51, is shown with a flaying knife and open Bible. These represent his faith in God's Word and his martyrdom. Sometimes three flaying knives are shown, or the more grotesque human skin upon a cross.

While preaching in Albanople, Armenia, the ancient theologian Hippolytus states that he was seized by the governor, flayed, crucified, and then decapitated.

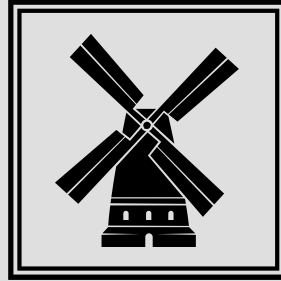
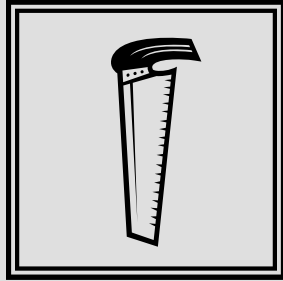
Thomas



A common symbol for St. Thomas is a builder's square and a spear. Sometimes arrows and stones are added, or merely the square used.

Thomas is believed to have preached the Gospel in India and built a church in Malipur before he was stoned, shot with multiple arrows and left to die until run down by a pagan priest with a spear.

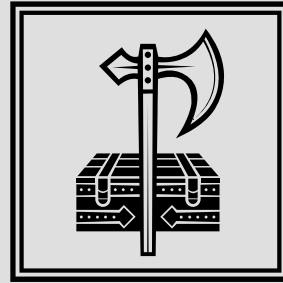
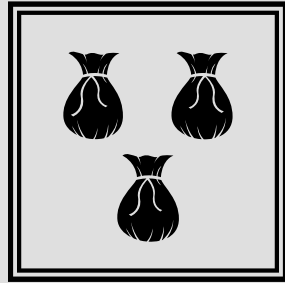
James the Less



So as not to be confused with James the brother of John, James the son of Alphaeus is referred to as “James the younger” (Mark 15:40) or as in common use today, “James the Less”. A popular symbol of St. James is that of a saw, representing the way his dead body was sawn apart as recorded by the ancient historian, Hegesippus.

The windmill is another popular symbol, but its origins are less clear. The best case that can be made stems from the rood screen at St. Helen’s church in Ranworth, Norfolk, in England. A young James is pictured with a toy windmill that is to represent a fuller’s mill. St. James is said to have been beaten to death by a fuller’s club. Therefore, over the centuries a fuller’s mill became a windmill that is now used as this apostle’s symbol.

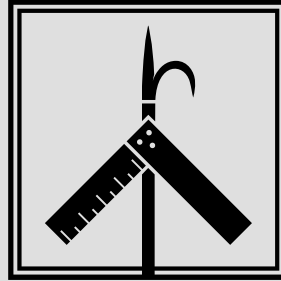
Matthew



When shown as an apostle, rather than one of the four evangelists, St. Matthew's symbol shows three money bags, referring to his original calling as a tax collector.

A money chest and a battle-axe or halberd are also sometimes used to symbolize this apostle. In some cases, the chest or axe are shown alone and not together. Matthew is thought to have been crucified in Ethiopia and beheaded by an axe.

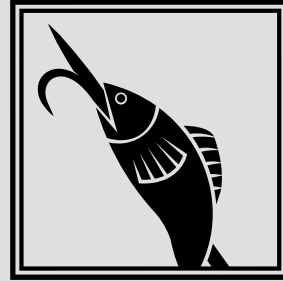
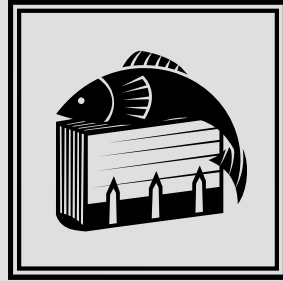
Jude



St. Jude (“Judas” in Greek) is believed to be Thaddeus as recorded in Matthew 10:3 and possibly “Judas, son of James” as described in Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13.

Some ancient historians write that Jude journeyed with Simon on many missions through Persia, hence the sailboat as his symbol. A boat hook and a builder’s square are also frequently used because he is said to have started many churches in Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia. The manner of his death is unknown.

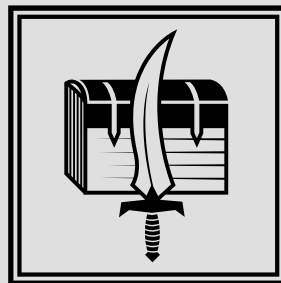
Simon



St. Simon, also known as Simon the Cananaean or Simon the Zealot, has a fish laying on top of a book as his symbol. This pictures him as being a great fisher of men through the power of the Gospel. Another symbol shows a fish being impaled by a boat hook.

Like Jude, little is known of his death, but he is still believed to have been martyred either by sawing or beheading.

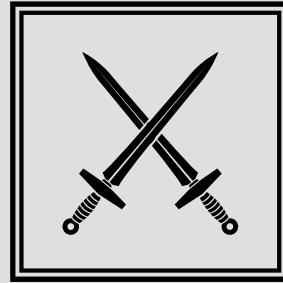
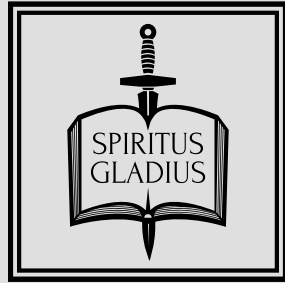
Matthias



Chosen to take the place of Judas Iscariot, St. Matthias is often substituted as the twelfth symbol for the disciples and apostles. An open book with a battle-axe is his most common symbol. A book with a scimitar or sword is also another common emblem for Matthias.

He is said to have been stoned and then beheaded by an axe or sword after missionary work throughout Judea and then Colchis (modern-day Georgia).

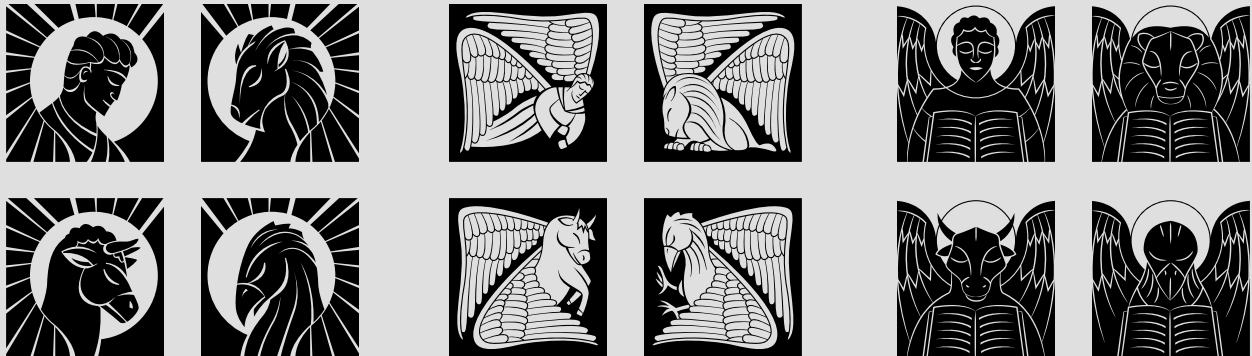
Paul



Although not part of the twelve apostles, St. Paul is often incorporated with the other apostles. The most frequently used symbol is an open Bible that bears the words, “Spiritus Gladius” (Sword of the Spirit), and a sword behind it. This is a reference to the Word of God in the letter to the Ephesians, chapter 6.

Crossed swords also symbolize the Ephesians passage and draw a more militant picture of Paul defending the Christian faith.

The Four Evangelists



Symbols of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, can be traced as far back as the 3rd century and were in widespread use by the 5th and 6th centuries. Besides being pictured as four men, these writers of the Synoptic Gospels have been portrayed as four scrolls, rivers, pillars and books, to name a few.

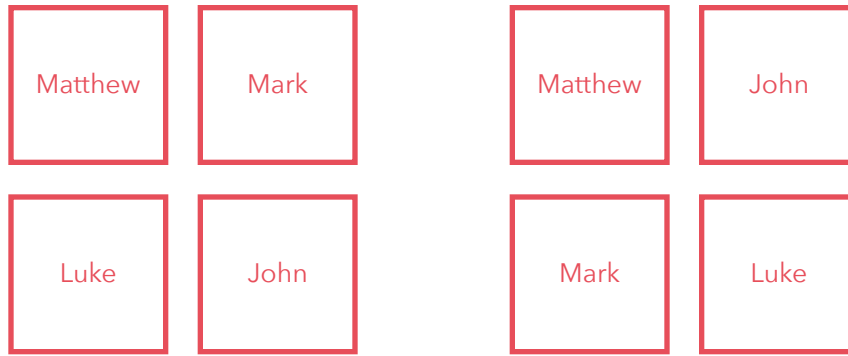
The most frequently used symbols are that of four creatures: a winged man, winged lion, winged ox, and eagle. The basis for these symbols comes from the winged creatures mentioned in Ezekiel, chapter 1, and Revelation, chapter 4. They are almost always shown with merely their head and wings. A nimbus around their head is also used in nearly every instance, both ancient and modern. However, their order was not always the same as they are now customarily used today.

Irenaeus, Athanasius, Augustine, Jerome and the Venerable Bede understood the symbols differently, attributing the creatures to different evangelists and often giving their own unique justifications for ordering them in that way. Since medieval times, Christianity has sided with Jerome's usage which orders them like this: Matthew, the winged man; Mark, the winged lion; Luke, the winged ox; John, the eagle.

The typical explanation of these symbols is this: Matthew is the winged man because he begins by tracing the human lineage of Christ. Mark is the winged lion because he opens his Gospel with the voice crying in the wilderness, John the Baptist. Luke is the winged ox because of his detailed account of the sacrificial death of our Lord. John is the eagle because, from John 1 to the end of Revelation, he carries us on eagle's wings to the throne of heaven.

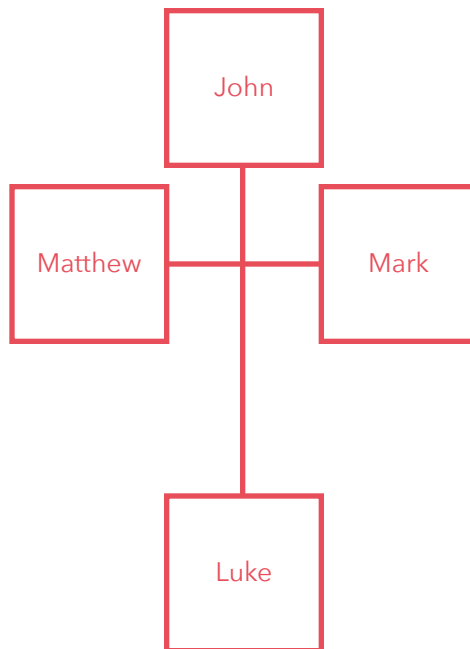
Other church fathers focus on the four chief events of Jesus' life on earth: The winged man is the Incarnation; the winged ox, his sacrificial death; the winged lion, his resurrection; and the eagle, his Ascension. Other meanings have been attached to these creatures that focus on either the Evangelists or the nature of Christ.

The arrangement of these four symbols vary widely, and are typically separated by a cross or placed in a 2 x 2 grid. Diagrams of the most common or ancient applications can be found on the next page.

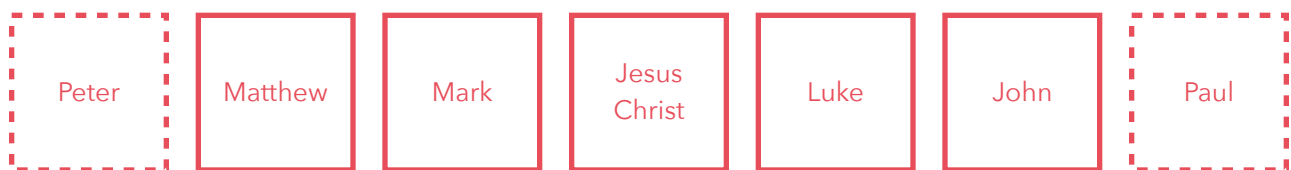


*With or without cross in the center.
The most commonly used arrangement.*

*With or without cross in the center.
Often the arrangement on Gospel covers and altars.*



The traditional arrangement of the evangelists on a cross.



When used on altars, lecterns and pulpits, the four evangelists are arranged on both sides of Christ, and if space permits, Peter and Paul are also added to both ends.

Thanks for downloading and reading this brief overview of the symbols of the holy apostles and evangelists.

Want to use the symbols found in this book? You can find these and many more symbols in the links below.

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