

## LETTER OF JAMES

The Letter of James is the first of seven “Catholic” Letters in the New Testament. The term “Catholic” was used from the Second Century to describe these items intended for the universal (“catholic”) church, not for particular communities, as Pauline letters were, despite the fact that a couple of them are addressed to a person or community.

James is neither of the two Apostles so named, but the person referred to as a “brother of the Lord” in Matthew and Mark. He was an early leader of the church in Jerusalem. Based on the substance and style of the letter, modern scholars believe that James did not write the letter himself, but that an anonymous Christian composed the letter after James’ death in 62 AD and attributed it to him. It was a frequent convention to validate teachings by attributing them to an early church leader.

The letter is a collection of loosely connected passages, with a common theme that the recipients must not hold a merely theoretical or abstract faith, but must implement that faith in their lives. Warnings, encouragements and exhortations on a variety of topics follow one after another with little transition.

### Readings at Mass

Except for 9 verses, the entire Letter of James is proclaimed over the course of the 22<sup>nd</sup> through 26<sup>th</sup> Sundays in Ordinary time in Cycle B and the weekdays of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> weeks in Ordinary time in even-numbered years.

### Outline (with notable passages)

1:1 – Greeting

1:2-18 – Persevere during trials or temptations, which do not come from God  
*Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. (1:14)*

1:19-27 – Put your faith into action – (a central concept for the Knights of Columbus)  
*Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves. (1:22)*  
*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this:  
to care for orphans and widows in their affliction  
and to keep oneself unstained by the world. (1:27)*

2:1-13 – Show no partiality – neither for the wealthy, nor against the poor  
*Did not God choose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he promised to those who love him? (2:5)*

2:14-26 – Relationship of faith and works

*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well," but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it?*

*So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

*Indeed someone may say, "You have works and I have faith."*

*Demonstrate your faith to me without works, and I will demonstrate my faith to you from my works. (2:14-18)*

3:1-12 – Warning: the tongue is a powerful organ, hard to tame

3:13-18 – True wisdom comes from above

*Who among you is wise and understanding?*

*Let him show his works by a good life in the humility that comes from wisdom. (3:13)*

*The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace. (3:18)*

4:1-12 – Passions cause divisions among you; resist the devil

*Draw near to God and he will draw near to you. (4:8a)*

4:13-17 – Don't presume that your ambitions will be realized; you don't know what the future will bring

5:1-6 – Warning: the unjust rich will pay for their ill-gotten wealth

5:7-12 – Patiently await the coming of the Lord; take no oaths

5:13-15 – Anoint and pray for the sick (a foundation for the Sacrament of the Sick)

*Is anyone among you sick? He should summon the presbyters of the church, and they should pray over him and anoint [him] with oil in the name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith will save the sick person, and the Lord will raise him up.*

*If he has committed any sins, he will be forgiven. (5:14-15)*

5:16-18 – Confess your sins; the prayer of the righteous is powerful

5:19-20 – Bringing a sinner back to the truth can result in salvation

*My brothers, if anyone among you should stray from the truth and someone bring him back, he should know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (5:19-20)*