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The Little Book of Saints

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Apostles

The apostles are the twelve men whom Jesus brought close to himself and chose to instruct more carefully. He treated them like brothers and prepared them to be sent out into the world with his message. (The Greek word *apostolos* means to send forth.)

Except for Matthew, who was a tax collector, these men were uneducated, mostly fishermen, and during their time with Jesus they were often unable to grasp the meaning of his teachings. Yet, they followed him everywhere, with their hearts opened by his love and their minds made clear by their devotion.

Jesus addressed their skepticism with small miracles and words of wisdom; and as they grew in love they participated in many extraordinary events. They listened to Jesus' sermons, watched as he healed the sick and tried to understand when he spoke in parables to the curious. Together with a number of other followers the apostles witnessed miraculous signs of his Godly presence and were present during his Sermon on the Mount when he described the blessings that await those who follow him.

Saint John

John, the son of Zebedee, and the brother of Saint James the Elder, became known as the “beloved disciple” and was the only one of the twelve who did not forsake Jesus in the hour of his passion. He was one of Jesus’ dearest companions and during the Last Supper he sat at his right and later was present at Jesus’ trial. In his final hours Jesus called to him from the cross, asking him to take care of his mother, Mary. “Woman, here is your son,” he said, and to John, “Here is your mother.”

On the night of his crucifixion, the body of the dead Christ was taken down from the cross, embalmed, and placed in a cave-like tomb, the entrance to which was sealed by a large stone. Three days later the tomb was empty and as one of the first to realize what had happened, with unshakable faith John proclaimed that his Master had risen from the dead.

In his later life he founded churches in Asia Minor. Tradition relates that he was brought to Rome and cast into a cauldron of boiling oil from which he emerged unhurt. He survived all his fellow apostles and lived to a very old age.

