

# The 12 Apostles' Symbols

Highlighted symbol = action used for 12 Apostles' Rhyme

## <sup>1</sup>Peter (original name: Simon, aka “the Rock”)

Symbol(s):

1. Upside down cross – Tradition holds that Peter was crucified upside down because he told his murderers, “I am not worthy to die as my own Savior did”
2. Keys – Jesus gave Peter the “keys to Heaven”, which was a symbolic way of showing that he would be the leader of the entire Church

## <sup>2</sup>Andrew

Symbol(s):

1. X-shaped cross – Was crucified on an x-shaped cross

## <sup>3</sup>James (aka James the Greater)

Symbol(s):

1. Scallop shell – James the Greater supposedly traveled all the way to Spain to preach the Gospel. Spain’s coast was supposedly covered with millions of scallop shells. It is also reported that James the Greater carried a scallop shell with him in order to scoop water and drink it.
2. Traveling staff – (see above)
3. Traveler’s hat – (see above)

## <sup>4</sup>John

Symbol(s):

1. Eagle – This is John’s Gospel symbol (because his Gospel was so intellectual that it “soared” high above the others).
2. Book – John’s Gospel that he wrote
3. Serpent (snake) in a chalice – Someone supposedly tried to kill John by putting poison in a chalice that he was drinking out of. When John drank from it he was miraculously unharmed.
4. Cauldron (large pot) – Tradition says John was brought to Rome, where he was beaten, poisoned, and then thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil. The boiling oil, however, did not harm him, so they exiled him to the Island of Patmos instead.

## <sup>5</sup>Philip

Symbol(s):

1. Loaves of bread (sometimes pictured in a basket) – Philip has a speaking part at the beginning of the miracle of the loaves and fishes (he says, “Two hundred days’ wages worth of food would not be enough for each of them to have a little bit.” in John 6:7)

## **<sup>6</sup>Bartholomew (aka Nathanael)**

*Symbol(s):*

1. **Flaying knife** – Bartholomew was supposedly skinned alive. He is oftentimes pictured holding his own skin (either his face skin held in his hands or his body skin draped over his arm).

## **<sup>7</sup>Matthew**

*Symbol(s):*

1. **Winged-man or an angel** – This is Matthew's Gospel symbol (because his Gospel begins with Jesus' genealogy [family tree]).
2. **3 moneybags** - He was a tax collector before he began following Christ. Tax collectors were usually seen as very bad and sinful people because they would oftentimes take extra money for themselves.

## **<sup>8</sup>Thomas**

*Symbol(s):*

1. **A carpenter's square** – Thomas supposedly built a church in India, which is important because he was the only apostle to travel and preach the Gospel outside of the Roman Empire.
2. **Spear** – Was killed with a spear.

## **<sup>9</sup>James (aka James the Less)**

*Symbol(s):*

1. **A fuller's club** – One story says James the Less was clubbed to death (another one says he was thrown from the top of the temple and then his dead body was sawed into pieces).

## **<sup>10</sup>Jude (aka Thaddeus)**

*Symbol(s):*

1. **Boat** – Jude traveled to many places to preach the Gospel.
2. **A club and axe** – Jude was beaten to death and then beheaded.

## **<sup>11</sup>Simon (the Zealot)**

*Symbol(s):*

1. **Saw** – Simon was supposedly sawn into pieces.
2. **A fish on top of a book** – Simon was a fisherman (hence, the fish) and he preached the Gospel (hence, the book) to a lot of people.

## <sup>12</sup>**Judas Iscariot**

*Symbol(s):*

1. **Rope** – After betraying Jesus, Judas committed suicide by hanging himself with a rope.
2. Moneybag full of coins – Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.