

August 24: Saint Bartholomew, Apostle

Gospel for August 24th, feast of Saint Bartholomew, and commentary.

Gospel (*Jn* 1:45-51)

Philip found Nathanael, and said to him, “We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.”

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”

Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” Jesus answered him, “Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.”

And he said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”

Commentary

Among the first disciples called personally by Jesus were some who

were eager to bring a brother or friend to meet Him. Andrew introduces his brother Peter to Him, and Philip brings his friend Nathanael, traditionally identified with the apostle Bartholomew. Philip's insistence with Nathanael, "Come and see," is made possible by the atmosphere of friendship and trust between them, and leads to the conversion of the new disciple.

Like Nathanael, we all need a living experience of Jesus. Although a deeper Christian life often begins with the announcement that comes through one or more witnesses, the essential thing is to soon attain a personal relationship with Jesus.

Nathanael's frankness leads our Lord to praise his simplicity, opening a dialogue that ends up conquering the heart of the new disciple. Jesus already knows Nathanael and has seen him sitting under a fig tree,

perhaps praying. Sitting under a fig tree recalls an expression found several times in the Old Testament to express a secure and tranquil atmosphere: “Each man sat under his vine and his fig tree, and there was none to make them afraid” (*1 Mac* 14:12).

We don't know what Nathanael's life was like before this call by our Lord changed everything. But perhaps his frank and somewhat cynical attitude at first is a sign that his life needed a totally new direction.

Bartholomew's call reminds us of the freedom of God, who surprises our expectations by appearing where we did not expect Him – sometimes when sitting tranquilly under a fig tree. If we allow ourselves to be won over by Jesus, we too will come to see “greater things” in our own lives and in the lives of others.

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