

Monday 3rd May 2021, Feast of St. Philip and St. James, Apostles.

Today we celebrate the feast of two of Jesus' Apostles; the chosen twelve who travelled with Jesus throughout His public ministry and led the spread of the Good News of salvation after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. St. Philip is mentioned quite a few times in the Gospel of John, and St. James seems to have had a good relationship with St Paul. Let's take a brief look at each of these two courageous men and consider what we can learn from them.

St. Philip was born at Bethsaida and was originally a disciple of St. John the Baptist. Jesus "found" Philip (Jn. 1:43) who in turn, "found" his friend, Nathaniel and invited him, to come and see Jesus, the long-expected Messiah (v.46). Philip seems to have been quite a rational person, as his introduction of Jesus to Nathaniel was a measured explanation, giving Jesus' credentials. It was St. Philip who was concerned that they did not have enough food or money to feed the five thousand (Jn. 6:7) and in today's Gospel we hear St. Philip asking Jesus to "Show us the Father" (Jn. 14:8). This leads to Jesus' explanation that if we have seen Him (Jesus), we have seen the Father. In other words, Jesus is the face of the Father and we come to know the Father in and through Jesus.

St. Philip seemed to be someone who liked the facts and who liked to get things clear in his head. When life gets too confusing at times, we can turn to St. Philip and ask for his prayers to help us get things sorted in our heads.

St. James, son of Alphaeus is also called "James the Less" and/or "James the brother of the Lord" (Mt. 13:55, Gal.1:19) to distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee. (Note that "brother" means cousin or from the same tribe or other relative). James "the brother of the Lord" ruled the Church (was the Bishop) at Jerusalem and wrote the epistle that bears his name, which is full of sober advice on the Christian life. At the "Council of Jerusalem" the Church's first council, it was St. James who sensibly summed up the conditions for gentile converts and who recognised that gentiles (pagans) who became Christians did not need to become Jews first. Josephus, a Romano-Jewish historian, recorded the importance James had had in the early Church at Jerusalem and also that he was stoned to death in AD 62.*

St. James says many wise things in his letter, such as:

- Anyone who lacks wisdom should ask God in faith for more wisdom (1:5).
- Faith without works is dead (2:17).
- Do not speak evil against one another (4:11).

St. Philip and St. James, pray for us.

* Information from Butler's Lives of the Saints,
Concise edition, Burnes & Oates (1991).