

Feast of St. Bartholomew (Jn. 1:45-51)

Today we celebrate the feast St. Bartholomew, of one of the twelve Apostles; men chosen by Jesus to witness to the Good News of salvation in Him. Little hard facts are known about St. Bartholomew; and there is even confusion about his identity. The “Nathaniel” of St. John’s Gospel which we hear today, is traditionally identified with the “Bartholomew” of Matthew’s Gospel (10:3). Whether this is accurate, or not, we don’t know, but today’s reading from the Gospel should not distract us from that.

Let’s reflect on what we see happening in this short passage from John’s Gospel, and what we can learn from this, for our own Christian vocation to pass on the Good News of salvation to other people.

1. Philip (another named Apostle) finds Nathaniel/Bartholomew and tells him that he has found the Messiah, the longed-for saviour of Israel (Jn. 1:45)
 - a. Do we tell people that we have found the ONE person who can save us?
 - b. Do we even talk about our faith to those outside our family and Catholic/Christian friends?
2. Nathaniel is amazed that the Messiah would come from such a lowly place as Nazareth (v.46).
 - a. Do we make assumptions about people according to where they come from or where they live?
3. Philip persists, saying “come and see” (v.46).
 - a. When did we last invite someone to Church?
 - b. We often reflect on Jesus’ invitation and call to us, but have we ever thought about the fact that Jesus can use other people to speak to us?
4. Jesus claims to have seen Nathaniel before Philip went to call him (v.48)
 - a. Jesus knows us, better than we know ourselves and so we need have no fear of approaching Him. He loves us more than anyone else does and only want us to draw closer to Him each day.
5. “You will see angels ascending and descending” (v.51). This is an allusion to Jacob’s vision (Genesis 28:10-19) and indicates that Jesus is indeed the expected Messiah who is the mediator between God and humanity (Catechism of the Catholic Church 333).
 - a. When we come to Mass, the angels are there, ascending and descending and we join with them in the Holy Holy Holy, although we don’t see them.

To sum up: Jesus calls us, sometimes through other people’s words. He knows us intimately and desires nothing more than we respond, without prejudice and come to share in His glory, along with the angels and saints.

Carol Ann Harnett 24th August 2020