

August 24th: Bartholomew, apostle

Gospel text (Jn 1,45-51): Philip found Nathanael and said to him, «We have found the one that Moses wrote about in the Law, and the prophets as well: He is Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth». Nathanael replied, «Can anything good come from Nazareth?». Philip said to him, «Come and see». When Jesus saw Nathanael coming, he said of him, «Here comes an Israelite, a true one; there is nothing false in him». Nathanael asked him, «How do you know me?». And Jesus said to him, «Before Philip called you, you were under the fig tree and I saw you». Nathanael answered, «Master, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!». But Jesus replied, «You believe because I said: ‘I saw you under the fig tree’. But you will see greater things than that. Truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man».

«Come and see»

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Today, we celebrate the feast of St. Bartholomew, apostle. Evangelist John so vividly narrates his first encounter with the Lord, that it is easy for us to visualize the scene. It is a dialogue between young, direct, franc... divine hearts!

Jesus casually meets Phillip and tells him «follow me» (Jn 1:43). Shortly afterwards, Philip, enthused about his meeting with Jesus, finds his friend Nathanael and tells him that, at long last, he has found whom Moses and the prophets wrote about: «He is Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth» (Jn 1:45). The answer he receives is not enthusiastic but rather skeptical: «Can anything good come from Nazareth?» (Jn 1:46). Something similar happens almost everywhere. It is standard procedure in every city or every town to be inclined to think that nothing worth its while may come from the next city, or town... there, they are all worthless... And vice versa.

But Philip does not get discouraged. And, friends though they are, he does not offer any additional explanation and just tells Nathanael: «Come and see» (Jn 1:46). He goes, and from the very first moment he sees Jesus his vocation shows up. What, apparently, may look as sheer chance, it was, no doubt, set up since long in God's plans. Nathanael is certainly not an unknown person for Jesus: «Before Philip called you, you were under the fig tree and I saw you» (Jn 1:48). What fig tree? Maybe it was just Nathanael's favourite place where he used to go to when he wanted to relax, to ponder, to be alone... Under the amorous gaze of God, though. Just like all of us, all the time. But to realize the infinite love of God for each one of us, to be fully conscious He is at my door knocking I need an external voice, a friend, a “Philip” who may tell me: «Come and see». Somebody to take me to St. Josemaria Escriva's way, which he describes like this: May you seek Christ, may you find Christ, may you love Christ.