August 24th: Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle

Gospel text (*Jn* 1:45-51): Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth.” But Nathanael said to him, “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” Philip said to him, “Come and see.” Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, “Here is a true child of Israel. There is no duplicity in him.” Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.” Nathanael answered him, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this.” And he said to him, “Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

“Come and see.”

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Today, we celebrate the Feast of Saint 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, frank... 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: “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 common 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 comes to light. What, apparently, may look like sheer chance, it was, no doubt, set up since long ago in God's plans. Nathanael is certainly not an unknown person to Jesus: “Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree” (Jn 1:48). What fig tree? Maybe it was just Nathanael's

favorite place where he used to go when he wanted to relax, to ponder, to be alone... under the loving 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.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “’Come and see.’ At this invitation, Nathanael, abandoning the fig tree of the law, whose shade prevented him from receiving the light, went to the one who withered the leaves of the fig tree, of the barren fig tree, of the fig tree that did not bear fruit. For this reason, the Word testified to him, saying that he was a true Israelite” (Saint Gregory of Nyssa)

- "How should we go to the Lord? Like this, with our truth as sinners. With confidence, also with joy, without putting on make-up. We should never put on make-up before God! We must go with the truth” (Francis)

- “Angels are spiritual creatures who glorify God without ceasing and who serve his saving plans for other creatures: ‘The angels work together for the benefit of us all’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 350)