

Homily For Tuesday of the 21st Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - August 24, 2021

Feast of St. Bartholomew

Revelation 21:9-14 "The city has 12 foundations, and on them are the names of the 12 Apostles."

Psalms 145:10-18 "O Lord, all your faithful shall speak of the glory of your kingdom."

John 1:45-51 "Jesus said of Nathanael, "Here is an Israelite in whom there is no guile."

Foundations of the Church

Introduction

Today we have everything from the initial conversion of one person, whom we honour particularly today, to the ultimate revelation of the City of God as the New Jerusalem, which is the eternal home, from all times, of all who love God. The first is from the Gospel of John. The second is from the Revelation to that same John. So, it is through John's eyes we see the glory of God revealed, from one convert to the whole 'bride of Christ', the Church.

St. Bartholomew

The first thing we should do is clarify who is this Bartholomew, since today's Gospel passage only refers to Nathanael. Some Scripture commentators refer to those two as entirely separate people, without connecting them. Other writers interchange them without question, as obviously the same person. Still others actually explain the connection and the Church's strong tradition that they are one and the same.

John tells us that Philip is one of the first disciples of Jesus. He starts evangelizing right away. He brings his friend to Jesus. That friend very probably has Nathanael as his first name, with the last name of Bartholomew. Bar always means 'son of' in the Hebrew language. Even today, one who has a 'Bar Mitzvah' is a Son of the Commandments of God. So his name was Nathanael Bar-Tholomew, son of Tolomai.

John

Now, this is not just a lesson in Jewish naming. It is also critical to the story because, when Philip tells his friend that Jesus is from Nazareth, Nathanael says what any Jew would say, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" In Israel at the time, one is known by where they come from and who is their father. For a man, that's his identity and also his social status.

Later, the Pharisees, with malice in their hearts, will say: Check out your scriptures. No prophet ever comes from Galilee (where Nazareth is). The difference here is that Jesus knows the heart of our Nathanael Bartholomew. Jesus always knows peoples' hearts. That's why we don't need to hide anything from him. And, when we run out of words during our prayer time, we can say, "Lord, you know my heart. Teach me your ways. Help me to take on your Sacred Heart as my own."

And what does Jesus see in Nathaniel. He is one "in whom there is no deceit." I much prefer other translations which say, "in whom there is no guile." It's a lovely word. 'No deceit' could just mean he doesn't lie. But the Lord Jesus sees in his heart that he has the purity and simplicity of a child. Remember when Jesus says that one cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless they become like a child. Well, that's Nathanael. He's already there. That's why he is a true Israelite, because he sees God.

With very little tangible proof, he identifies Jesus as the Messiah. All he has is that Jesus knew who he was, sitting under a tree, before he met him. That's enough for Nathanael. Later, many others will reject faith in the Messiah even when they see miracles.

So Jesus tells him that he will see much greater things. He is not referring to miracles but heaven itself. He will see the very veil between heaven and earth pulled back, the Son of Man and his angels. This opening in the veil is reveals the joining together of the physical world with the spiritual world.

Revelation

Our other reading picks up this theme with a revealing of the ultimate joining of heaven and earth. At a time of great distress, with persecution of the Church, John is given a vision.

You remember that, when Satan tempted Jesus in the desert, he took him to a high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, offering them to Jesus. But here the Spirit brings John to a high mountain and shows him the one true kingdom, over which Jesus already has dominion.

Three things are worth noting. First, the kingdom comes down from the Father, is ruled over by the Son, and is animated by the Holy Spirit. This affirms and brings together the Holy Trinity, in which we affirm our faith every time we say the creed. Second, this kingdom is called 'wife' for the first time. The bride of Christ is now firmly established in loving intimate union with all of the members of the kingdom, in a permanent bond of faithfulness.

Finally, those who are citizens of the New Jerusalem enter either by the gate with the name of their Israelite tribe, one of twelve. OR, they are citizens of the New Jerusalem by belonging to one of its twelve foundations, which have the names of the twelve Apostles. Nathanael Bartholomew is one of those solid foundation stones.

Call To Action

Today is a day to let our hearts be simple, without deceit or guile, as we pray earnestly for the intercession of this Apostle, that our Lord will receive us into his Kingdom. Let us not shy away from this invitation from our Saviour. Let us, with Nathanael, serve God with joy and without fear, in this life, and in the next.

Key Scripture Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *Proclaim the salvation of God day by day. Tell among the nations his glory.*

Collect: *Strengthen in us, O Lord, the faith, by which the blessed Apostle Bartholomew clung wholeheartedly to your Son.*

Revelation: *One of the seven angels said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It has a great, high wall with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates are inscribed the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites. And the wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Psalm: *O Lord, all your faithful shall speak of the glory of your kingdom. Your dominion endures throughout all generations*

John: *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses and the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth. Nathaniel said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael and said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no guile!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "You will see greater things than these. You will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."*