

9. January 2025

Biblical meditations
THE GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN
"Come and see"

Jn 1:44-51

Philip was from Beth-sa'ida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathan'a-el, and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathan'a-el said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathan'a-el coming to him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathan'a-el said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathan'a-el answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" was Nathaniel's sceptical question when Philip, whom the Lord had already called to follow Him, told him about Jesus, the son of Joseph. Evidently Nazareth did not have a good reputation for Nathanael. But what came out of Nazareth was not only something good, but the Son of the Good, as Nathanael would later confess.

In today's passage we hear again the statement: "*Come and see*". In this case it is Philip who says it to Nathanael. He saw and believed: You are the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Come and see... Here is a key word to encounter Jesus. Whoever goes in search of God, whoever follows this inner impulse and searches for the deeper meaning of existence, will sooner or later meet Jesus. Hopefully, in his search he will also meet a Philip, someone who has already recognised the Lord, who bears witness to Him and leads him to Jesus. Perhaps the seeker, like Nathanael, is sceptical and finds it hard to believe that

he could meet Jesus today through the Church. Come and see' should be the answer for him, and he should meet people in whom the Lord is present and through whom He is at work. If he is a 'true Israelite in whom there is no guile' - as was the case with Nathaniel - then Jesus Himself will convince him. Perhaps He will give him answers to the questions he has been asking for a long time and make him understand that he has been searching for Him for a long time. If his heart is not closed, Jesus will be able to enter it and His light will testify who He is: *"In your light we see the light"* (Ps 36:9).

What we can critically question is whether we really allow the Lord to be present in our lives and in the life of the Church in such a way that it is easy for the seeker to find Him, or whether we even become obstacles because of lack of faith and neglect in putting it into practice.

I remember with pain, for example, that there were Jews who, by the grace of God, had accepted Jesus as the Son of God and King of Israel, and who were then prevented from entering the Catholic Church. They were confronted with priests who had the idea that the Jews had their own way with God, as if the Heavenly Father had not sent His Son first of all *"to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Mt 15:24) to redeem them.

But let us look instead at the disciples who had just been called by Jesus: Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip and Nathaniel, that 'true Israelite in whom there is no guile'. There could hardly be a higher praise from Jesus for Nathanael! Surely this is how our Heavenly Father wanted to meet the children of His chosen people. He gave His disciples the power to become children of God (Jn 1:12) because they responded wholeheartedly to God's call. They are a shining example for all time, representing the faithful remnant of Israel, the holy Jerusalem. God's plan was fulfilled in them. It was they who then went out to all nations to proclaim that the Saviour and redeemer of mankind had come to reconcile Jews and Gentiles to God in one body through the cross (Eph 2:16).

We have heard his testimony and, by God's grace, we have come to the same conviction that Nathanael expresses so clearly in today's text: *"You are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel."*

We too, who have received the same light as the first disciples, have had the heavens opened to us so that we can see the heavenly Church united with the Church militant,

and the angels, in the service of their King, ascending and descending to glorify our heavenly Father with fervour.

They help us on the way to eternity and assist us in fulfilling the mission God has given us.

But the first disciples and apostles are not only models, they are brothers and friends to whom we can turn with confidence, asking that the fire of the Holy Spirit that burned so brightly in them may never be extinguished in us, so that Jesus may also say of us: *"This is a true disciple, in whom there is no guile"*.

And then we can become His witnesses, like the disciples, repeating what Philip said to Nathanael: "Come and see".