



1) Opening prayer

Father,
help us to seek the values
that will bring us enduring joy in this changing world.
In our desire for what you promise
make us one in mind and heart.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

2) Gospel Reading - John 1,45-51

The next day, Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'From Nazareth? Can anything good come from that place?' Philip replied, 'Come and see.'

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming he said of him, 'There, truly, is an Israelite in whom there is no deception.' Nathanael asked, 'How do you know me?' Jesus replied, 'Before Philip came to call you, I saw you under the fig tree.' Nathanael answered, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel.' Jesus replied, 'You believe that just because I said: I saw you under the fig tree. You are going to see greater things than that.'

And then he added, 'In all truth I tell you, you will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending over the Son of man.'

3) Reflection

- Jesus returned to Galilee. He met Philip and called him telling him: "Follow me!" The purpose of the call is always the same: "to follow Jesus". The first Christians sought to preserve the names of the first disciples, and of some they even kept their family names and the name of their place of origin. Philip, Andrew and Peter were from Bethsaida (Jn 1, 44). Nathanael was from Cana. Today many forget the names of the persons who were at the origin of their communities. To remember the names is a way of preserving the identity.

- Philip meets Nathanael and speaks to him about Jesus: "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets wrote, Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth". Jesus is the one to whom all the history of the Old Testament refers.
- Nathanael asks: "From Nazareth? Can anything good come from that place?" Probably, even in his question there was some of the rivalry which existed among the small villages of the same region: Cana and Nazareth. Besides, according to the official teaching of the Scribes, the Messiah would come from Bethlehem, in Judah. He could not come from Nazareth in Galilee (Jn 7, 41-42). Andrew gives the same answer which Jesus had given to the other two disciples: "Come and see for yourself!" It is not by imposing, but rather by seeing that persons are convinced. Once again the same way: to meet, to experience, to share, to witness, to lead toward Jesus!
- Jesus sees Nathanael and says: "Truly, he is an Israelite in whom there is no deception". And affirms that he already knew him when he was under the fig tree. How could Nathanael be an "authentic or true Israelite" if he did not accept Jesus as the Messiah? Nathanael "was under the fig tree". The fig tree was the symbol of Israel (cf. Mi 4, 4; Zc 3, 10; 1 Kg 5,5). An authentic Israelite is the one who knows how to detach himself from his own ideas when he perceives that they are not in agreement with God's project. The Israelite who is not ready to bring about this conversion is neither authentic nor honest. Nathanael is authentic. He was waiting for the Messiah according to the official teaching of the time (Jn 7, 41-42.52). This is why at the beginning, he did not accept a Messiah coming from Nazareth. But the encounter with Jesus helped him to understand that God's project is not always as people imagine or desire that it be. He recognizes, acknowledges his deception or mistake, he changes his idea, accepts God as Messiah and confesses: "Rabi, you are the Son of God: you are the King of Israel !" The confession of Nathanael is only at the beginning: The one who will be faithful will see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending over the Son of man. He will experience that Jesus is the new bond of union between God and us, human beings. It is the dream of Jacob which has become a reality (Gen 28, 10-22).

4) Personal questions

- Which is the title of Jesus that pleases you the most? Why?
- Have you had an intermediary between you and Jesus?

5) Concluding prayer

Upright in all that he does,

Yahweh acts only in faithful love. (Ps 145,17)