

Saints Philip and James/II Easter 2022
Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish
Father Craig Looney

St. James 1.1-12 St. John 14.1-14



Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He sent other good shepherds out to take care of his sheep. Some of these other good shepherds we know well...others we know almost nothing about...except their names.

Saints Philip and James were two of the original Twelve Apostles about whom we know very little other than what is recorded in the Gospels and Early Church tradition.

Philip was born in Bethsaida...the hometown of Peter and Andrew...whom he likely knew. John records he was one of the earliest men to follow Jesus and later brought his friend Nathanael (also called Bartholomew) to meet him.

Like the other Apostles it took Philip some time to figure out who Jesus really was. In the Miracle of the Fish and the Bread...Jesus asked Philip what he should do about feeding the large crowd of people. John tells us Jesus asked this to test Philip (John 6.6). Philip answers it would take more than 200 days wages...let's call it \$4,000...to feed the crowd.

Jesus wanted Philip and the other Apostles to witness God's power first-hand. They were to be the Church's foundation stones. They needed to understand how dependent we are on God for everything we have...and that God gives us the tools (gifts) we need to do his work.

John records on another occasion Thomas complaining about where Jesus was taking them. Jesus replied, *"I am the way. If you know me, then you will also know my Father. From now on you do know him and have seen him"* (John 14.6-7).

Then Philip said, *"Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us"* (John 14.8). We can almost sense Jesus' frustration when he answers Philip, *"Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father"* (John 14.9).

Early Church writers record Philip and Bartholomew preaching the Gospel in Asia

Minor, present-day Turkey. Both men were martyred there in 80 AD...they are the Patron Saints of the Armenian Apostolic Church and Armenia.

When it comes to James things get a bit more complicated. James was a common name and four men named James are mentioned in the New Testament. The James we commemorate today was a son of Alphaeus. He is called "the Less" to distinguish him from James called "the Great", who was Zebedee's son and John's brother. "Less" simply means "younger".

The James we commemorate today may have been Matthew's brother since Matthew is also identified as a son of Alphaeus (Mark 2.14). There are other traditions that identify him as one of Jesus' cousins. He was not the first Bishop of Jerusalem...that was another James called "the Just". He may have been the author of the Epistle of James but that isn't certain. James "the Less" was martyred in Jerusalem in about 62 AD. He is the Patron Saint of dying people, druggists, pharmacists and textile workers.

If we look at the men Jesus chose to be his Apostles...they were ordinary men. Peter and Andrew were fishermen. They worked for the successful Zebedee and Sons Fish Company in Capernaum. They worked hard and played hard...having a brew at the Capernaum Bar and Grill after a long day fishing. Maybe Philip joined them before heading home. We would like to know more about James "the Less". What we do know...he was an ordinary man like Philip...like the fisher folk of Capernaum...before the *Lord came down*.

On a personal note, today has special meaning for me. This is the twenty-first anniversary of my ordination as a deacon. At his ordination a man is given a charge by the bishop. I was told: *"People will come to you and ask you to show them Jesus. Always point away from yourself and to the cross"*.

It's OK we don't know more about Philip and James. They were good shepherds Jesus sent out to do God's work. They didn't seek fame or glory in the work they did for Jesus. Our job is to show people Jesus and the cross. We shouldn't seek fame or glory either...we should just be happy to do God's work.

