



Saints Philip and James

Feast Day: May 3rd

We celebrate Philip and James, two of the twelve apostles – missionary saints who provide a wonderful models of true friendship with Jesus. St. James, the son of Alphaeus, is also known as James the Lesser so as to distinguish him from St. James, the son of Zebedee, another apostle. Jesus individually called both James and Philip to be his devoted followers, to be the pillars of the Church, to be his apostles.

We celebrate them together on May 3rd because their relics were brought together to Rome, where they have remained in the Basilica of the Holy Apostles. Both saints provide a more grounded example of how we are each called to live the Gospel – not with our words, but through our actions – and serve as a reminder of the fact that, as Christians, we will be tested.

They are a beautiful demonstration of how we are all strengthened by faith, by Jesus alone. In John 6:6, Philip is tested by Jesus when Christ asks him how they should feed the multitude, and Philip’s response displays an earthly practicality that there were not enough resources to feed everyone. It is, partly, because of Philip that we have the blessed statement from Jesus: ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ in John 14:6. Jesus was teaching his disciples to shed their earthly mentality and unite themselves to himself, to truly recognize that the limits of humanity need not apply because Jesus is the bridge to holiness.

Tradition says James was martyred in Jerusalem around Passover for preaching the Good News about Jesus’ death and resurrection. He was arrested and ordered to stand atop a wall in Jerusalem, and when he began preaching, soldiers threw him off the wall and stoned him. Philip was also martyred in the early days of the Church.

Jesus said, “Follow me,” and Philip turned to Nathanael and said, “We have found the man whom Moses wrote about in his teachings and whom the prophets wrote about. He is Jesus, son of Joseph, from the city of Nazareth.” (John 1:45) but Nathanael did not believe – at first. Philip’s first instinct was to believe, whereas others – like Nathanael – were skeptical. Philip and James are both great examples of what it means to “gossip the Gospel.”

All power is God’s power. “You will be clothed with power from on high,” Jesus told Philip and the others. (Luke 24:49) It is up to all of us to receive his gifts – his abundance – because we have free will that works in union with God’s will, if we allow it.

Saints Philip and James, pray for us.

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