

# ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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## Philip... Apostle and Saint

THE HOST APOSTOLATE

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How well do you know the New Testament? How well do you know the Gospels? Do we know the names of all the Apostles? I remember catechising first Holy Communion children and trying to get them to recall the names – only a few were familiar to them – Peter, John, sometimes Andrew but little else... Then of course we are told frequently that we know little about them. The list of those called and chosen are read out but does it register? Try it and see how many you know. We can perhaps add James, but who else and more likely, Judas.

Now let me join those ranks a little too... I have often been surprised by a mention of the two other Apostles and then realised that the names pop up a few times, Thomas is one such. Recently I had an ‘epiphany moment’ – as they are now called – when doing a Lectio Divina and the name Philip came up. As it happens we had just celebrated the Feast of Ss. Philip and James the Lesser (a strange title, as apparently he was smaller than the other James). The reading a few days earlier was that from Acts, of Philip teaching the eunuch about Jesus...

(Acts 9. 26-46). This was a reading usually attached to Philip. But then there was another (the Last Supper discourse) with those famous words... “Show us the Father”.

Just to make life a little more interesting, I realised that there were indeed two Philips – Philip the Apostle and Philip the Evangelist/Deacon. There seems to be a little confusion about which is in ‘action’, especially in the Acts of the Apostles. The word ‘probably’ occurs several times when referring to say, the instruction of the Ethiopian eunuch, as he probably was Philip the Apostle, though sometimes was, a later chosen Philip, the Deacon. This Philip was one of the seven Deacons chosen to help with the distribution of food to widows and to do other administrative work. The same conflict arises when we speak of ‘the’ Philip who evangelised in Samaria



and was noted for his miracles, but most likely he was St. Philip the Apostle.

However, because of this let us look at the Gospels where St. Philip is referred to specifically.... St. Philip was called and chosen early in the formation of the twelve Apostles. He came from the same place as St. Peter and Andrew, Bethsaida in Galilee, and he probably knew them, Chapter 1 of St. John, verse 35 reveals that his call came very early in the formation of ‘the twelve’. Andrew and John, who first went to ‘see where Jesus lived’ and followed Him. Andrew

then told Peter about Him and he too came to see Jesus. The next day Jesus was in Galilee and met Philip, and again said “Follow Me”. Philip in turn was instrumental in the call of Nathaniel. Here follows a lovely incident. Nathaniel was not convinced at first. Philip told him that Jesus was from Nazareth. “Nazareth? Can anything good come from that place?” said Nathaniel. Philip replies “Come and see”. Then Jesus (John 1. 46-51) astounds Nathaniel by saying that He saw him

under the fig tree before Philip called him. He also pays him a compliment of being ‘incapable of deceit’ and that he should not be surprised at Jesus’ ability.

Next we encounter Philip as one of the twelve Apostles (Matthew 10. 1-10). Jesus gives them the authority of casting out spirits, as well as curing all kinds of diseases and sickness. He gives them instructions too as to how to evangelise and conduct themselves.

Jesus is always preparing and instructing the Apostles and disciples. St. Philip is one named specifically in this process. This time it is teaching in action. A great crowd had gathered to hear Jesus speak, over five thousand, and Jesus was concerned about their welfare, that they might be hungry. He asked Philip ‘Where can we buy bread for all these people to eat?’

*“The life of the body is the soul; the life of the soul is God.” Saint Anthony of Padua*

He asks him to test him, as He already knew what he was going to do'.... to feed them. Philip replies "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite". This kind of retort seems to have been a trait of Philip, rather like St. Thomas – a questioner and a doubter. Philip seems to have more of a problem with the Divinity of Jesus than His Humanity. Perhaps he wanted the Messiah to be that 'great leader'. We next see Philip bringing people to Jesus (John 12. 20).

Some Greeks came to worship in Jerusalem and approached Philip saying that they would like to see Jesus. Philip tells Andrew and they together go to see Jesus. Philip here acts as we should! They both went to see Jesus and Jesus predicts His death, "Now the time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified". As the group was growing, Jesus reminded them of why He came.

Clearly Philip would have been at many of the events in the Gospels, as the twelve travelled with Jesus, so as to become witnesses to the events. Once again, Philip is mentioned, again with his doubts, at the Last Supper. All were present but Philip had a special part to play, as recorded by John (14. 8-11). Picture the scene: Jesus has just called them to share the last meal with them, and he makes His 'farewell speech'. Jesus reveals to Peter that he will betray Him. Thomas and Philip question Jesus further, saying that they cannot follow if they don't know the way. Jesus replies "***I am the way, the truth and the life, and no-one can come to the Father except through Me.***" Philip's reply to this "Lord, let us see the Father and then we will be satisfied". "Have I been with you all this time Philip, and you still do not know Me?". What a reproach from Jesus, but another indication that Philip had a problem with Jesus as God, at this stage. These words could also be addressed to us.

After Jesus' Passion and death, the Apostles stayed mostly together until after the Resurrection. They responded to the unfolding events in various ways. Jesus came to tell them He was leaving and that the Holy Spirit would come to help them. Philip would have been at the Ascension with the others, he is also mentioned as being in the Upper Room (Acts 12). The Apostles were joined in prayer, together with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and the other women.

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Philip's death is recorded as being either beheaded or crucified upside down.

Now why concentrate on one Apostle? We often forget that each one had a special rôle to play and was unique. Each one was known by the Lord, individually. There is so much we can learn from the Gospels and we often ignore the details of things and people from whom we can learn so much. But it is also a pointer to the fact that there are millions of people, Christians, who each have a part to play. Each one is significant, whether named or not. Like 'the twelve' we are part of a special group, a family of believers and we can learn from the least as well as from the more prominent... ***Details matter!***

Halina Holman

### **Pope Francis**

"The key, is the reference to Sacred Scripture. It is a matter of accepting that one's life is subjected to the scrutiny of the Word of God. In the encounter between the events of the world and of our lives, on the one hand, and the Word of God, on the other, we can discern the appeals that the Lord makes to us."

Rome 2022



### **Prayer to Saint Philip**

**O Glorious Saint Philip, at the last Supper you said to Jesus, 'Lord show us the Father, and it will be enough for us'.**

**Help us to make this our prayer also and to seek God in all things. Obtain for us the Grace to know the Father and Jesus,, whom He has sent for in this does Eternal Life consist.**

### **Feast Days in June**

**1<sup>st</sup> Our Lord Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest**

3<sup>rd</sup> SS. Charles Lwanga & Companions

**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of The Most Holy Trinity**

5<sup>th</sup> St. Boniface      8<sup>th</sup> St. William of York

**11<sup>th</sup> Sunday: The Body and Blood of Christ**

13<sup>th</sup> St. Anthony of Padua

**16<sup>th</sup> The Sacred Heart of Jesus**

**17<sup>th</sup> The Immaculate Heart of Mary**

**18<sup>th</sup> Eleventh Sunday of the year (Ord. time)**

20<sup>th</sup> St. Alban (1<sup>st</sup> Martyr of England)

21<sup>st</sup> St. Aloysius Gonzaga

22<sup>nd</sup> SS. John Fisher & Thomas More

23<sup>rd</sup> St. Etheldreda

**24<sup>th</sup> The Birth of St. John the Baptist**

**25<sup>th</sup> Twelfth Sunday of the year (Ord. time)**

27<sup>th</sup> St. Cyril of Alexandria    28<sup>th</sup> St. Irenaeus

**29<sup>th</sup> SS, Peter & Paul, Apostles**