

## Epiphany 2 John 1:43-51

How do we recognise when someone different or special comes into our presence? It isn't always as easy as looking and seeing a person for who they are. For example, we might come across a celebrity we have seen on television or in a film and when faced with them in real life we are not quite sure if we are looking at the person we think we are. Part of that uncertainty comes from a disconnect in the context in which we are seeing them, and partly our expectations of how a person will look are skewed by make up, lighting enhancement and possibly even deliberate adjustment to the image of a person by computer. All of this leads us to be unsure that the person we see with the resemblance to a celebrity we think we recognise, is really them.

And recognition of something or someone different is very much the theme of the gospel reading today. John the Baptist recognised Jesus for who he was, the one John had been preparing people to encounter. Simon Peter and Andrew recognised Jesus for someone special after Andrew had spent the afternoon with him and introduced Jesus to his brother. But when he encountered Philip Jesus simply said, "follow me" and Philip did it, not only that but he took Nathaniel with him, so convinced was he that he was face to face with the messiah.

But wonder how was he was convinced? Unlike a celebrity, Jesus was not preceded by an entourage of organisers and staff. At the beginning of his ministry, at least, Jesus was very much a lone figure, preaching and attracting attention but by no means the only person doing that. Jesus was not a beneficiary of mass media so there was no way of sharing a picture or image of him ahead of a visit.

He was not rich, influential or powerful as society would understand those things. We catch a glimpse of what people must have thought of his background when Nathaniel asks "can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Jesus was unremarkable to look at, not what anyone was expecting, with none of the outward trappings of a monarch, celebrity or a leader of any sort.

Yet he was recognised for who he was, he spoke and people listened, he led and people followed, he held no earthly power yet he ruled and continues to rule the hearts of those who recognise him for who he is, sovereign lord of all.

St. Philip holds a place in the calendar of saints as do all of Jesus' disciples and the practice of learning about saints is all about being inspired by their journeys of faith while we follow our own. Philip, in particular, stands as an example to us all of one open enough to recognise God at work with little convincing required and no coaxing at all. He is the apostle remembered for bringing others to Jesus, when a group of Greeks wanted an audience with Jesus they approached Philip with those words, we want to see Jesus, words which almost operate as a prayer by themselves for us all. We remember this encounter during the season of Epiphany as this whole season is about the revelation of Jesus as Messiah to the world, and Phillip's invitation to Nathaniel to see Jesus for who he truly is remains an inspiration to disciples through the ages that sometimes for people to find their way to Jesus it requires someone who knows him to show the way.

In this way, the apostle Philip serves as an excellent example to each one of us as we move through our journey of faith. We have, each of us, found our way here because we find something of interest in the Christian faith and even, perhaps we see something of God in the work and ministry of our particular church community. Just like Philip immediately recognised Jesus as someone different, someone of God. Yet, we need to be on our guard against a narrow view which fails to see God working where he wills. If we are not careful,

we can content ourselves that we have backed the right horse, found our community of faith and are sticking to what we know and understand when in fact God is continually at work in us and those around us and we need to keep our eyes open to recognise God where he is at work. We need to keep listening for God's call to us and the direction we are to take with our lives and decisions. We cannot let our own views, backgrounds and prejudices constrain the people and places within which we look for God because God will not be constrained. God will continue to inspire and guide people and it is up to us to recognise it and to look for it.

My we be inspired to look for Jesus in our midst today but in doing so, we need to remember that we will not find him behind fanfares and entourages, he is in the quiet, compelling voice which says follow me. To hear it we must take the time to listen.