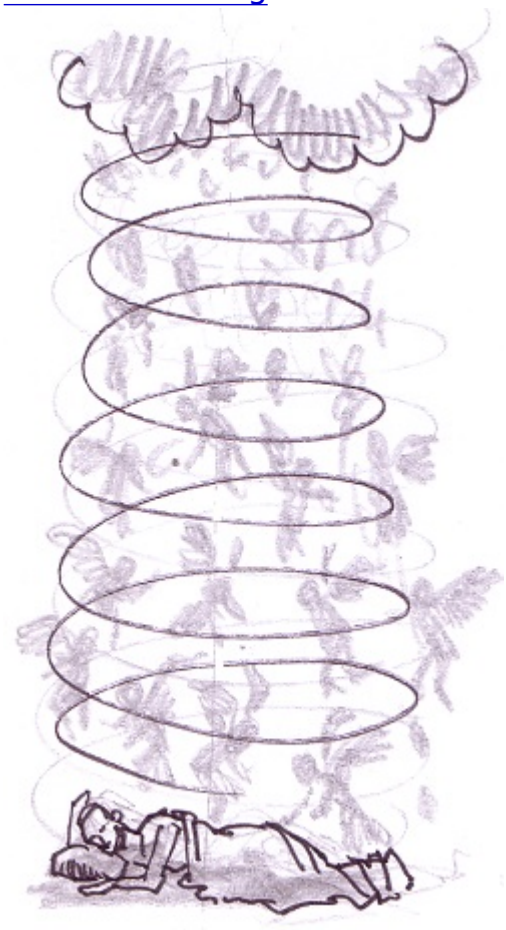
Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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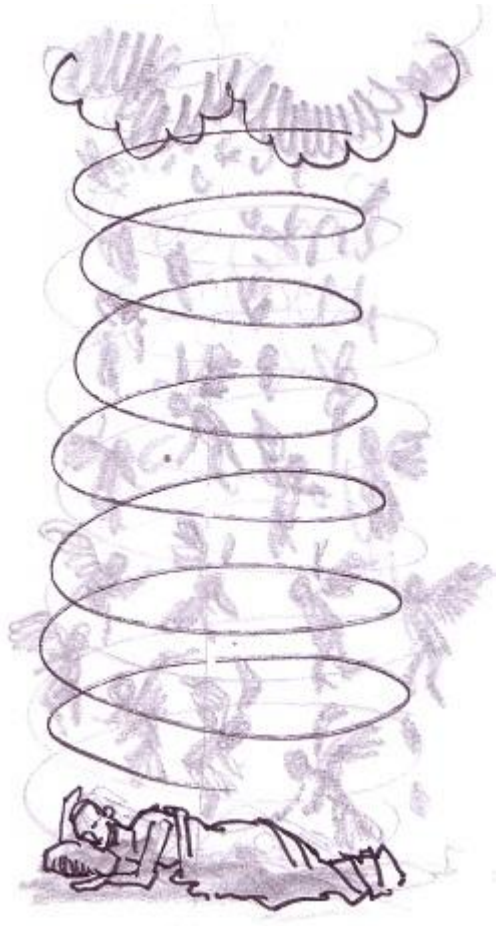

“How do you know me?” (John 1:48).

Feast of Saint Bartholomew, Apostle

Rv 21:9b-14; John 1:45-51

The call of Nathaniel, also known as Bartholomew, tells us a lot about how disciples become apostles. A disciple is someone who is learning about Jesus. An apostle is someone who knows Jesus enough to be sent to share him with others. The root of the word apostle is “to send.”

In his journey from learning to sharing, Nathaniel is at first a seeker, someone who wants to find God through prayer and reflection. When Philip tells him about Jesus, Nathaniel has already been looking for the messianic figure foretold in the Law and the Prophets. But he is skeptical when Philip tells him Jesus is from Nazareth. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?’ he replies, repeating what was probably a common slur about the hill country of Galilee, the northern part of Palestine, where pagan influences permeated the culture.

“Come and see,” Philip answers. Thus begins Nathaniel’s transformation from curious doubt to intimate encounter with Jesus, who has already called Nathaniel when he was at prayer under a fig tree. The imagery and allusion the author of the fourth Gospel uses to describe this meeting recalls the story of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel after his night of wrestling with God and after he had dreamed of angels ascending and descending between heaven and earth.

Nathaniel is a "true child of Israel," transparent to truth. And before his time with Jesus is complete, he will have come to know him as more than a prophet or even the Messiah. He will know Jesus as the one who unites heaven and earth, divinity and humanity, as foretold by Jacob’s ladder. Blessed with this revelation, the Apostle Nathaniel, called Bartholomew in the other Gospels, will be sent to share news of God’s reconciliation with the world in Jesus Christ.

Because of our baptism, each of us shares in the miracle of Jacob’s ladder, with angels ascending and descending continuously in the everyday graces God has for us. We are disciples called to learn about our new life in Christ. And each time we share that life with others we are apostles. This is what we celebrate today.

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