Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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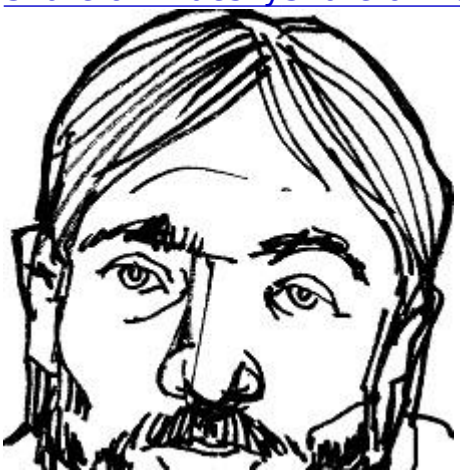

“How do you know me?” (John 1:46).

1 Jn 3:11-21; *Jn 1:43-51*

The encounter between Jesus and Nathaniel is one example of how the evangelists layered in the identity of Jesus with scriptural texts that went all the way back to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Their purpose was to show how the promise of the Incarnation was first hinted at in imagery and stories Jesus would fulfill centuries later.

When Jesus met Nathaniel, he called him a “true Israelite in whom there is no duplicity.” The reference is to Jacob, a man of great duplicity who was transformed after a night of wrestling with God and renamed “Israel.” This same Jacob had fallen asleep and had a vision of heaven connecting to earth by a ladder of ascending and descending angels, famously known in the Bible as “Jacob’s Ladder." When Jacob awoke, he was in awe and cried out, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Gen 28:19).

Nathaniel asked Jesus how he knew him, and Jesus revealed that he had seen him “under the fig tree.” Nathaniel realizes that Jesus has “seen” him in a powerful moment of prayer, perhaps about Jacob's vision of heaven and earth being united by angels. That Jesus knew of this experience stunned Nathaniel, and he knew he was in the presence of that very union of divine and human. Jesus was the promised Messiah, reconciling heaven and earth in himself.

Today’s gospel invites us to consider our own call to accompany Jesus as disciples. We are in the presence of Someone who sees us and knows us intimately. He knows the secrets of our hearts, the deceptions and denials that have kept us from our true destiny, the struggles and searching that have brought us to this moment of truth in the loving gaze of God. Jesus knows our deep name, the name that describes who we will become by following him and sharing in the mystery of his death and resurrection.

If we allow this faith encounter to take place, if we let ourselves be found and brought to Jesus, if we open our hearts to him today, we will be standing in the house of God and at the gate of heaven.