

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, May 3rd 2014

Feast of Sts. Philip and James

Today's readings might seem at first disconnected, as if they had been chosen for the feast of Sts. Philip and James only because the first one names James and the second one names Philip. Yet there is a more subtle common ground to both readings.

In the first reading Paul's injunction if you hold fast to the word I preached to you hints to the existence of other preaching variations, which Paul had to compete with and which caused bewilderment among the Christians, as they were exposed to differing "truths".

The gospel reading offers us firm ground from which to face such bewilderment in the presence of an array of "truths". We have to keep in mind that at its core faith is first a commitment to a Person, before it includes a commitment to faith tenets. Indeed a commitment to a Person who is Way, and Truth and Life. As long as we remain committed to the One who is Truth, we are on solid ground. We may be technically (theologically) mistaken in our stance, but we are not lost, provided we remain open to learning. No, truths/tenets are not unimportant, but they are not the core of our faith; they are only an articulation of, or an expanding on, a faith that preexisted them.

Jesus tells us that Eternal life is this, to know you and the One you sent [Jn. 17:13]. To know you is different from, and more important than, to know about you. We do not study our parents, children or friends to know about them. We get to know them through familiarity and love. To know Christ-Truth –eternal life is this– is more central than to know about Christ-Truth. Specific tenets and theological understandings reflect more our knowing about Christ. To know about Christ is christology, while to know Christ is christianity. Christology is for the specialists, christianity is for all and especially for all the baptized.

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