

We had last night our St Philip's Day dinner and at the centre was our wonderful statue of St Philip.

He looks very much like a fisherman with his net and fish. I imagine that he was a fisherman because we are told he is from Bethsaida on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee, or as it is also called, the Sea of Tiberius. Philip was also a friend of Andrew and Peter who were both fishermen. Philip's name is Greek. Not surprising because for hundreds of years before Roman rule, the area was occupied by the Greek forces after Philip and Alexander the Great. In fact the language of learning was Greek — the common Greek in which the New Testament is written.

We find all the stories about Philip in John's gospel — He appears only in lists of the twelve in the other three gospels.

In John's gospel there are no such lists but quite a number of the twelve appear in stories of Jesus' ministry and it is in this way we discover something of each of the followers of Jesus. Stories about Philip which do not appear in the gospels but come to us from other sources tell of Philip's death at Heirapolis about 200 Km inland from Ephesus on the west coast of modern Turkey. It is reported that John, the author of the gospel, died at Ephesus as an old man...

Two things come to mind —

1. Did Philip travel with John and help with stories about Jesus?
2. Surely John in his later years, reflecting on all that he knew as he wrote, was able to paint some wonderful "word pictures" of Philip and the other disciples.

In John's gospel, Philip appears:

1. In Chapter One, Philip tells Nathanael about Jesus, "we have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets also wrote: Jesus, son of Joseph from Nazareth." — "Come and see"
2. In Chapter 6, it is on the Eastern side of the Sea of Galilee, not far from Bethsaida when Jesus asks "Where are we going to buy bread for the people to eat?"

Philip expresses doubt that they would have enough, even if they had six months' wages. Then we hear of the crowd being fed from the loaves and fishes of the young boy. It is this story which gives us the symbol for St Philip:

Five loaves and two fish.

3. We next see Philip in Jerusalem where the group of Greeks come looking for Jesus. We never hear if they get to see Jesus, but Philip again appears to be the welcomer of the apostolic band.
4. Finally, we hear of Philip with Jesus when Jesus speaks about his going away and preparing a place.

It is Philip who says:

"Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

In the first three stories, Philip is the welcomer, the connecting person.

In the fourth story, Philip appears to be searching/questioning.

The two elements: 1. welcoming
2. questioning

seems to reflect something of our St Philip's family.

Philip seems to have a concern for people — he also desires to bring people to Jesus — probably because he seems to have an answer for their need.

His concern for Nathanael
 for the crowds
 for the Greeks

In the third story we find some questioning about Jesus' relationship with the Father.

"Show us the Father and we will be satisfied."

and Jesus' answer challenges Philip:

"Have you been with me so long Philip and you still don't understand?"

The two elements of Philip's ministry:

Concern for people and a desire to bring them to Jesus who has the answer
— he sees practical, real things happen.

But then there is the questioning and searching!

Surely must be the example we are to follow:

Concern for people
And a recognition that the answers are in Christ
But also the openness, the freedom to question, to search and to discuss

Welcome
Worship — inclusive, international, inspiring
Pray — for each other
Build bridges — make connections
Study — mid year Tuesday nights
 meditation
 meal
 study

While being concerned for people and knowing Jesus has the answer, we need to keep questioning, searching and not taking things for granted in our relationship with God. Philip says to Jesus: "Show us the Father"

Jesus says: "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father" and "believe because of the works themselves" — meaning believe because of what you have seen.

We too need to keep reflecting on what we know of God and when people say Show us the Father, we may be able to let the world know that God is in our midst.