

## 17th January 2021 Second in Ordinary Time

### Readings

1 Samuel 3: 1 - 10

Psalm 139: 1 - 6, 13 - 18

1 Corinthians 6: 12 - 20

John 1: 43 - 51



### A Jesus Scan

The last time I slid into a MRI Scanner the words of today's Psalm came to mind - *You created every part of me – you have examined me and know me - you can see right through me!* The Gospel reading today, together with the Psalm (139) makes me think Nathanael had a similar experience – a Jesus Scan! He was in Bethsaida at the time when Jesus moved his ministry from West of the river Jordan to the towns and villages of Galilee. He knew Bethsaida and many of its inhabitants because Capernaum, just about five miles west round the lake was a place to which Mary took Jesus and the family for short breaks. [John 2.12] and where he had come to know some of the young men who would become his inner group of disciples. We do not know much about some of those men. Simon, Andrew, James and John were all in the fishing business and I like to imagine that Philip and his friend Nathanael worked in the markets. Nathanael was a native of Cana – some sixteen miles away in Judaea – and a frequent visitor to the market where his family may have traded in grain and oil.

Like Andrew, Philip had become excited by Jesus and his new teaching as well as his healing acts and it was quite natural for him to want to share it all with his colleague and friend when they met at their trade - *We feel sure he's the Messiah. John says so. He's the one who will set Israel free from all this political and religious oppression!* However, Nathanael was sceptical – on two counts. Firstly, because Jesus was from Nazareth and that implied religious and racial issues for Nathanael. He was a true Jew, steeped in the scriptures, who wanted to live by the Law of Moses. He did not hold Nazarenes in high regard. Nazareth was a frontier town with a mixed population, a breeding ground for insurgents violently opposed to Roman rule and taxation. Many there had a very loose approach to religious observance. Nathanael often met some of them when trading in Nazareth and the new town at Sepphoris. He knew how bargains and corruption went side by side. He never stayed long in their company. He even preferred his Jewish name, Nathanael to his given name, Bartholomew with its Roman connections.

Secondly, he was sceptical about *Messiahs*. They had seen many come and go! He had different views about the Messiah. Like Philip he was of gentle spirit, tired by years of warfare, suffering and slaughter. *War never brings peace*, he often said. *Surely there must be another way. We need a Messiah to bring peaceful justice and fairness for all the people.* Philip' agreed. *That's just what Jesus says. Why don't you come and meet him?* The Gospel story tells how Nathanael accepted the challenge. I can imagine Philip leaving them together and then meeting him again a few days later.....

*Well Nathanael, Philip greeted his friend. How did you get on with Jesus? He'd got you summed up pretty well! I didn't understand what he meant by having seen you under the fig tree but my goodness you were soon convinced about him! You even called him Son of God and King of Israel!*

Looking out at sunset ripples on the lake, Nathanael remained thoughtful for a moment. *The fig tree, he said, is outside our house in Cana. I saw him when he passed months ago but didn't know who he was then. He just paused a moment and looked straight at me. I've never known such a gaze. His eyes, calm and questioning seemed to pierce right through me – my body, my mind, my deepest thoughts and feelings. It disturbed me for days. It reminded me of the words of the psalm when it says God knows us in every way - since even before we were born! I thought about it a lot. I felt like Moses and Samuel and others when he called them by their name! He knew ME – personally!* Nathanael took a breath. *When we met again the other day I just knew! That first look was like God's look. He really did know me – through and through. I felt so sure. He truly is the Christ. He spoke in a way I could understand - about changing people's hearts – creating a kingdom of love and peace! He said we shall see greater and greater things and I'm sure we shall. If he will have me, I'm going to throw in my lot with him. By the way, he added. He called me Bartholomew!'*

Through the centuries so many people just like us have made that same decision when they have come close enough to let Jesus scan their lives.

### **Prayer**

Scan me Lord.

Show me all that needs changing and healing.

