Philip & James the Less

Feast Day:
3 May

DERRY DIOCESAN CATECHETICAL CENTRE

Philip was born in Bethsaida, Galilee. He may have been a disciple of John the Baptist and is mentioned as one of the Apostles in the lists of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and in Acts. Aside from the lists, he is mentioned only in John in the New Testament. He was called by Jesus Himself and brought Nathanael to Christ.

Philip was present at the miracle of the loaves and fishes, when he engaged in a brief dialogue with the Lord, and was the Apostle approached by the Hellenistic Jews from Bethsaida to introduce them to Jesus. Just before the Passion, Jesus answered Philip's query to show them the Father, but no further mention of Philip is made in the New Testament beyond his listing among the Apostles awaiting the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room. According to tradition he preached in Greece and was crucified upside down at Hierapolis under Emperor Domitian.

St. James the Less, the author of the first Catholic Epistle, was the son of Alphaeus of Cleophas. His mother Mary was either a sister or a close relative of the Blessed Virgin, and for that reason, according to Jewish custom, he was sometimes called the brother of the Lord. The Apostle held a distinguished position in the early Christian community of Jerusalem. St. Paul tells us he was a witness of the Resurrection of Christ; he is also a "pillar" of the Church, whom St. Paul consulted about the Gospel.

According to tradition, he was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and was at the Council of Jerusalem about the year 50. The historians Eusebius and Hegesippus relayed that St. James was martyred for the Faith by the Jews in the Spring of the year 62, although they greatly esteemed his person and had given him the surname of "James the Just."

Saints Philip and James share a combined feast day because, even though they died at different times and in different locations, their bodies were moved and brought to Rome at the same time in early May.

The Church commemorates on the same day. They are buried together in the Church of the Twelve Apostles in Rome. They represent to us two aspects of Christian holiness. The first preaches faith, the second works; the one holy aspirations, the other purity of heart.