The Sunday of Orthodoxy – Divine Liturgy
Homily on John 1:43-51

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

In today's Gospel, we hear the story of Jesus calling Philip and Nathanael to follow Him. At first glance, it may seem like a simple invitation, but there is a deeper significance in this encounter that speaks to us personally, calling us to examine how we respond to the invitation of Jesus in our own lives.

Jesus begins by calling Philip, saying, "Follow me." This is a direct command, yet it's wrapped in love and an invitation to a relationship. Philip doesn't hesitate; he immediately follows. And what does he do next? He seeks out Nathanael and tells him about Jesus. Philip's response is not just to follow, but also to share the Good News with someone else.

It's important to pause and reflect on Philip's example. Discipleship is not just about following Christ; it's also about inviting others to come and see. Philip doesn't wait for Nathanael to come to him. He actively seeks him out and offers an invitation to encounter Jesus. How often do we, like Philip, share our experience of Christ with others? Our own witness can be the spark that leads someone to encounter Jesus.

When Nathanael first hears about Jesus, he expresses doubt: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" It's a valid question from a human perspective. Nazareth was a small, insignificant town, and for someone to claim greatness from such a place was unheard of. Nathanael's reaction is one that many of us may relate to – we have our doubts, we question, and we wonder how God can work through the ordinary, the humble, and the unexpected.

But notice Philip's response: he doesn't try to argue or defend Jesus. Instead, he says simply, "Come and see." This invitation is the heart of evangelization. It's not about having all the answers or convincing someone through logic alone. It's about inviting them into a personal experience, to see for themselves who Jesus is and what He can do in their lives. Sometimes, the best way to lead someone to Christ is not through our words, but through our actions and our willingness to invite them into a deeper encounter with Him.

When Nathanael meets Jesus, he's surprised by Jesus' words: "Here is a true Israelite in whom there is no deceit." Nathanael, confused, asks, "How do you know me?" And Jesus answers, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree."

Jesus sees Nathanael, not just in the physical sense, but with a deeper knowledge that touches the heart. He sees Nathanael's soul, his character, his truth. And it's in this moment that Nathanael realizes that Jesus is no ordinary man. He recognizes Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel.

What does this tell us? It shows us that Jesus knows us intimately. He sees beyond our surface, beyond our doubts and questions, and knows us at the core of who we are. And just as Jesus

revealed Himself to Nathanael, He also reveals Himself to each one of us. Jesus invites us into a personal relationship, one where He sees us fully and loves us unconditionally, calling us to follow Him and to live as His disciples.

Finally, Jesus tells Nathanael, “You will see greater things than these.” Jesus is promising a deeper revelation of Himself – not just as the Son of God, but as the one who will do wonders, miracles, and ultimately, who will lay down His life for the salvation of all.

This is an invitation to all of us. Following Jesus is not just about accepting an initial call to discipleship, but about entering into a lifelong journey of discovery. Jesus promises that as we follow Him, we will witness greater things – not just in the world, but in our own hearts. The more we grow in relationship with Him, the more we see His presence in our lives, and the more we experience His transforming power.

"Come, and see!" These simple yet profound words echo through the centuries, calling us to step into a deeper relationship with the living God. In the Gospel reading, we hear this invitation extended to us, just as it was to Philip and Nathanael. It is a call to encounter Christ personally, to come into His presence and to experience the fullness of His love and grace.

The invitation to “Come, and see!” is, therefore, an invitation to all people everywhere to accept and embrace the Orthodox Catholic Faith. The Orthodox Catholic Faith is not a distant set of doctrines or rigid and inviolable rules, but an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, the source of all joy and eternal happiness. It is a relationship with Christ that gives us freedom to the max and opens the door to endless possibilities.

Our Orthodox Catholic Faith is a way of life. In fact, it is The Way. Living Orthodoxy is not easy. It is a struggle and takes a lot of work and effort. But it is a way of life that is the most perfect and sublime way of life a human being could hope to live. Why, because it leads us to eternal life and everlasting bliss. What more could we possibly hope for or desire?

The invitation to “Come, and see!” is also an invitation to join Christ’s Body – the Orthodox Catholic Church. Our Holy Orthodox Catholic Church is a vibrant, living organism, of which Jesus Christ is the Head. He is the Fountain from which all life flows. He is the blood which gives life to all members of His Body.

Our Orthodox Catholic Church offers us a path of salvation that is rooted in ancient traditions, yet alive with the power of the Holy Spirit today. It is THE path that connects us to the saints and martyrs, to the angels and the heavenly hosts, all gathered around the throne of God in eternal worship.

The Church invites us to step beyond the limitations of this world and enter into the beauty and mystery of God's Kingdom. In the liturgical life of the Church, in the Sacraments, and in the communion of believers, we find a foretaste of Heaven—a glimpse of the deep joy and peace that comes from knowing Christ intimately.

To "come and see" means to open your heart to the transformative power of God's love. It means saying “Yes” to His invitation to walk with Him, to hear His voice, and to follow His

lead. It means recognizing that the Church is not just a place, but the Ark of Salvation—the very Body of Christ, where we find healing, forgiveness, and unity. It is in this sacred community that we encounter the mystery of God's love, and in this encounter, we are transformed.

Today's Gospel invites us to reflect on our own response to Jesus' call. Are we like Philip, ready to follow and share the Good News with others? Are we like Nathanael, sometimes skeptical, but open to encountering Jesus more deeply? Jesus calls us to "Come and see", to witness His love and truth, and to invite others to do the same. The journey of discipleship is not just about believing, but about encountering, experiencing, and sharing the love of Christ with the world.
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As we leave this Divine Liturgy today, let us ask ourselves: How can I follow Jesus more closely? How can I be a witness to His love and invite others to come and see? May we have the courage to respond to His call, knowing that He sees us, loves us, and invites us to follow Him into the fullness of life

I invite you, dear friends, to answer the call to "Come and see!" Come and witness the beauty of the Orthodox Catholic Faith, where Christ is truly present, where His joy is tangible, and where salvation is offered to all who seek Him. The Church stands ready to welcome you, to guide you into a life of true happiness, peace, and fulfillment. Come to the Ark of Salvation, and in that embrace, you will find your true home in Christ.

Amen

+Archbishop Stephen