

## The Icon & The Vision of God

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**Gospel:** John 1:44-51 AV: *Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*

“Come & See”!!

What a courageous and holy invitation!! Philip calls Nathaneal to see with him what? Or Who? God!!

How much was this invitation strange for a Jewish man who was taught "No one sees God unless he dies"? He knows well that if he wants to come closer to God, he may meet Him in His glory or through the presence of His glory in the Temple or Tabernacle. The

glory of the Lord came down on the Ark of the Covenant. No one approached the Ark except the Chief Priest and he did that once a year. How can a Jewish man with such a faith be called to see God?!

May be the state of this challenge at that time was not easier than its state today. Is it easy to go out of the church today, and meet our neighbor, whether he was a believer or an atheist, and take him with his hand, saying to him, "Come and I will show you God!" If we don't do this or we cannot do it, what are we doing than?

Although this challenge is great, but the true Christian knows that this is his mission. This is our mission, to show God to others, for we are messengers of love, redemption, and workers for the salvation of others. And this challenge is the mission we, the Christians, adopt, because we realize that it is a need, the real need of man and the final need of the human search in suffering...

Man looks at different matters and builds different dreams. Human beings look at various objectives because they are thirsty. But the human experience proved that achieving all these objectives does not lead to quench the real thirst, even if this thirst was unknown to them, and this thirst is to God.

The human eye is content and relaxed only at the vision of the icon of God. This final human desire was expressed by Philip when he said to Jesus: "O Master show us the Father (God) and it suffices us."

Man is a lost sheep who is searching. Christ has made us lights in the world. And this is our mission. The sensitivity of our mission is to lead man to the requested

vision in every search, to the vision of God. How great is this mission! The Christian love picks up immediately this need and adopts it as its mission. The expression "Come and See" summarizes the words of every Christian to all his neighbors. It summarizes the Orthodoxy of every Christian. And what is meant by Orthodoxy (Right Belief) here is Orthopraxis (Right Conduct). The expression "Come and See" is our word to people from our entire mind, heart and concern. Blessed are the feet of the preachers with this expression of peace.

To the human question, "O Master, show us the Father and it suffices us" (John 14:8), Jesus answered, "He that has seen me, has seen the Father." Christ is the image of the Father. He is the Word of the Father to people. He represents the entire Divine Will. He is in the place of the Father. We can truly see and know the Father through Him. He is the One who shows us the Father. And this Word, Christ, we see and meet and live with in various ways.

We see Jesus, speak to Him and learn from Him through the Icon. Did we see the Icon of the All-Mighty (Pantocrator) and learn from it the care of God and His call to us? Every time we look at the Nativity Icon, we are put in front of the event of the Incarnation, the Divine Call, and God's opening of our human and personal history. This impels us to a response setting the path of our life.

The icon is Christ expressed through colors. It reveals one time the care of God, another time His might, humility, and everything about Him that is beautiful and that calls us to action. We speak to Christ through the icon.

The Icon is a tool of worship. We mean by worship all what leads us to speak to God and discuss with Him our life, actions, mission, and relationships. So through the icon we see God and we show Him to others.

If we want to depict the Divine Love and reveal it to people in its most beautiful way, and if we want to summarize the expression of John the Theologian "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends"(John 15:13) then let us paint Christ on the Cross, and reveal this mystery to everyone. Brethren, let us hold up high the icons for they are words that lead us to achieve the expression, "Come and See." Look at this icon and you'll see the Divine Love. In another you'll see His justice, His call, His action, and Him waiting for us...

The veneration of icons is a duty because the icon takes us to its first element, as Saint Basil the Great says, and thus becomes a tool to show God to people.

The icon is the quenching of the human eye's thirst and its comfort. When Saint Silouan joined the monastery after a troubled life, he started his journey of repentance and the works of virtue. One day he came into the Church and saw in the icon of Christ the traces of forgiveness.

To thy holy icon O Good One, we bow down in worship, asking for the forgiveness of our sins. Thy icon we elevate and meditate, and through it we see your face and love, crying to all our neighbors, "Come and See."

Amen.