

## Minor Festivals of the Church Year

### St. Philip & St. James, The Apostles – May 1<sup>st</sup>

In Christian artwork the symbol representing St. Philip is a cross with two loaves of bread. The loaves of bread depict the time when Jesus posed the question to Philip of where to buy bread at the feeding of the 5,000 (*John 6:5*), while the cross traditionally represents his martyrdom of being crucified and stoned to death. The symbol for St. James is a cross with either a saw or two clubs. The symbols represent James' martyrdom as he may have been either sawed into two or beaten to death. Today we take a look at two of Jesus' disciples who devoted their lives to serving their Savior all the way to death.

The disciple Philip, as well as James, is mentioned in the lists of the apostles (*Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:14, Acts 1:13*), but only in the Gospel of John is more told about him. Philip was from the town of Bethsaida in Galilee, the same fishing village from which the Lord called Peter and Andrew. Philip was also instrumental in bringing Nathanael to Jesus (*John 1:42-51*). During Holy Week, some inquiring Greeks came to Philip seeking to meet with Jesus. Philip took them to Andrew and the two of them brought them to Jesus (*John 12:20-22*). On Maundy Thursday evening, Philip asked Jesus to show the Father to him and to the rest of the disciples (*John 14:8*). Not much else is known. According to tradition, after Jesus ascension, Philip first went into Scythia on the northern coast of the Black Sea (*lower modern day Ukraine and Russia*), and from there to the area of Phrygia (*modern day Turkey*). In Phrygia, according to tradition, Philip was crucified, stoned, and buried there.

The disciple James, in the list of the apostles is called the "son of Alphaeus", also called "James the Younger" or "James the Less." Perhaps due to his younger age or because of his lesser stature, James son of Alphaeus was given those names to distinguish him from the other disciple James - James the son of Zebedee, who was also called "James the Elder." James son of Alphaeus should also be distinguished from James of Jerusalem. James of Jerusalem was the half-brother of Jesus, who after Jesus' resurrection came to believe and went on to head the Jerusalem Church and later write the Book of James in the Bible. Other than being included in the list of apostles, there is no other mention of James son of Alphaeus in the New Testament. There is also no information regarding his field of labor, although traditionally he is said to have served in lower Egypt area until the time of his death.

We celebrate the *Minor Festival: St Philip and St James* on May 1<sup>st</sup>, because this is the day, when their remains moved to the new Church of the Holy Apostle's in Rome. But more importantly we take time to celebrate this minor festival to thank the Lord for his faithful servants who carried his saving gospel into all lands and to all people. Even though not much is recorded about themselves or their ministries, they are still no "lesser" than the other "greater" apostles. Philip and James saw the miracles of Jesus, heard his teaching, witnessed his death, resurrection, and ascension, and became his witnesses to the world.

Even though we might not be counted among the list of the apostles, we are still counted as citizens of heaven. We are still counted of recipients of God's grace. We are still counted among the believers who stand every day in faith. We are still counted as children of God. May we, like Philip and James, continue to devote our lives to serving our Savior all the way to death. "*Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life*" (*Revelation 2:10*).

Read...**Matthew Chapter 10** as today's Scripture Lesson.

Blessings to you and your families,

Pastor Matthew Guse