



Fr. J. Patrick Foley

Itinerant Papist Preacher

Retreat Ministry • Parish Missions

"Come away by yourselves to a quiet place and rest awhile!..." Mark 6:31
Are you ready to accept the invitation?

Obscure Witnesses

*"Amen, Father, on your planning.
Amen, for you'll see us through.
Amen when the cross weighs heavy.
Amen everything you do."
from Stanley Wiersma, Last Visit in Three Voices*

May 3: the Feast of Philip and James, the latter known as "the Lesser," to distinguish him from James, brother of John and one of the "inner circle" of Jesus' twelve. Both this James, and Philip, can be counted among the "lesser" apostles insofar as they are presumed to be included in references to the Twelve, but rarely are mentioned by name. But think about what they witnessed, what they heard, what they came to believe – and how all that changed their lives.

As is true of most of the early followers of Jesus, we know little of the lives of these two men either before or after their years with Jesus. They went, it seems, from obscurity to obscurity. And yet they, and those others who chose to follow Jesus, were so changed by that experience that their witness changed others, who in turn changed others, on and on through generations beyond telling, all the way to our own. And we too – perhaps, like them, rarely rising above obscurity – have been commissioned through our Baptism, not only to pass on what has been given to us, but to witness to its transforming truth by lives that are changed.

We may not understand why we have been given this commission, and we certainly do not know what the results of it will be. Perhaps the best we can do is to trust that the Spirit of Jesus is at work in us, just as Jesus was at work in Philip and James, and will bring about a harvest beyond our imagining – just as Philip and James never imagined what their efforts would lead to.

The sentiment expressed by Stanley Wiersma can well serve as a prayer that we might be the kind of willing, if obscure instruments, that Jesus found quite acceptable in choosing Philip and James.

Patrick Foley