Spirituality
Pencil Preaching

by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

August 23, 2021
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

“Come and see” (John 1:47).

St. Bartholomew, Apostle

Rv 21:9b-14; John 1:45-51

The theme of connecting heaven and earth appears often in the Bible. In today’s passage from Revelations, creation is complete when the bride, the wife of the Lamb, descends from heaven as the holy city of Jerusalem. The marriage of Jerusalem and the Lamb fulfills the covenant between God and his people.

This same connection is cited in the first chapter of John’s Gospel in the story of the call of the Apostle Nathaniel (also called Bartholomew), when Philip tells him that the Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth. Nathaniel first disparages the town in Galilee as of no importance, but when he meets Jesus, he is astonished when Jesus tells him he has seen him at prayer “under the fig tree.” Nathaniel has apparently been reflecting on the text about Jacob’s vision at Bethel of a ladder with ascending and descending angels connecting heaven and earth (Gen 28:12). Nathaniel suddenly realizes that Jesus is that ladder, the promised messiah who has united heaven and earth. He is talking to the incarnate Son of God.

When we pray the “Our Father,” we are asking that heaven come to earth. This was accomplished in Jesus by his Incarnation. And even more astonishing, we are invited to share in this union of human and divine natures by our relationship with Jesus. The prayer said by the celebrant during the offertory at Mass affirms this: “By the

mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”

What does it mean to bring heaven to earth? The “Our Father” tells us: We pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is heaven.” Everything Jesus preached is part of the Kingdom of Heaven: Peace and justice, compassion for the poor, daily bread for all, forgiveness, freedom from evil. We pray for these things, but we are also empowered to work for them because heaven comes to earth in us if we ask for it. “Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man” (John 1:51).

Advertisement