

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER DANAHA (JANUARY 14TH 2007)

Dearly beloved:

In today's Gospel, we are presented with what seems to be a nice simple picture of evangelism. This is the case also in the verses just prior to today's reading. There John the Baptist has offered his witness to Andrew, and Andrew in turn spreads the good news to his brother Simon Peter.

In addition, as today's Gospel reading opens, Jesus is calling Philip to be his disciple. Fully convinced that this Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah, Philip is moved to share the good news. He finds Nathaniel and tells him that Jesus of Nazareth is Messiah, the One of whom the prophets spoke. Nathaniel, however appearing a bit skeptical he wonders, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" "Come and see," Philip replies. Therefore, Nathaniel goes to look, and seeing the actual Jesus convinces him also. "You are the Son of God," he exclaims. Philip, a new disciple of Jesus, at first failed to convince his friend Nathaniel that he had found the Messiah. Nathaniel was very skeptical. He didn't like Nazareth and didn't want to have anything to do with people who came from such an out of the way place. How could the Messiah come from such a seemingly low-down town? We reject others (or at least keep them distant from us) because they come from some place or position we don't like or find fault with. Rather than argue with his friend, Philip took the wiser strategy of inviting Nathaniel to "come and see" for himself who this Jesus claimed to be. Clever arguments rarely win people to the gospel, but an encounter with the person of Jesus Christ can transform one's life forever. Nathaniel found in Jesus more than he could have hoped and dreamed. Jesus spoke a word to Nathaniel and it set his heart ablaze with wonder! Jesus, who knows our hearts better than we do, revealed to Nathaniel the innermost thoughts and desire of his heart. Nathaniel was hungry for knowledge of God. He really wanted to know God personally. God places in every heart a longing and desire to know the One who created us in love for love. Nathaniel accepted Jesus as Messiah and Lord because he spoke to the need of his innermost being -- the desire to know God personally and to be united with him in his glory. Jesus' response to Nathaniel's new faith is the promise that he himself will be the "ladder which unites earth with heaven". Jesus is the true ladder or stairway to heaven. In Jesus' incarnation, the divine Son of God taking on human flesh for our sake, we see the union of heaven and earth -- God making his dwelling with us and bringing us into the heavenly reality of his kingdom. Jesus' death on the Cross and his Resurrection opens the way for each of us to come into a new relationship with God as his sons and daughters.

The Lord Jesus opens the way for each of us to "ascend to heaven" and to bring "heaven to earth" in the daily circumstances of our lives. God's kingdom is present in those who seek him and who do his will. Let us pray as Jesus taught, *May your kingdom come and your will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*

**Please read the following Bible verses, in preparation for this Sunday's commemoration.**

**Bible readings for Sunday, January 14th 2007.**  
**(Second Sunday After the Baptism of Our Lord))**

**Before Holy Qurbana:**

**Leviticus - 22: 26-33**  
**Proverbs - 9: 1-9**  
**Isaiah - 51: 1-8**

**Holy Qurbana:**

**General Epistles: I Peter - 3: 7-15**  
**Epistles of St. Paul: Hebrews - 1: 1-4**  
**Holy Gospel: St. John - 1: 43-51**

With prayers,  
Thomas Alex