

## RABBI, YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD!

Next year, “Year C”, we’ll read from John, Chapter 2, the *Marriage Feast at Cana* where Jesus, in his most human way, saved the party by changing 132 gallons of water into wine. These events of this first week of the Lord’s ministry mark a new beginning, almost a new Genesis. Here is the parallel:

(1) Genesis maintains that the universe was created in six days and God rested the seventh day.

Even so...

(2) Christ’s renewal of the universe is begun in just the seven days of Christ’s personal revelation that we call epiphany, the *showing forth*, of himself.

To be specific, (in brief) the story of Genesis says that the Father revealed his mighty power in a week during which the world was sorted out from chaos. Light, the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets were put in the Heavens, the water was relegated to its proper locations and the dry land appeared. Then plants, trees, animals and Man and Woman were created and united to be the parents of all humanity. God looked down, says Genesis, rested on the Sabbath and celebrated the miracle of Creation. God says that all was very good.<sup>1</sup>

In similar manner the Christ revealed himself to the world in a week, a week that also begins with water (poured by John the Baptist) and ends with a marriage celebration where Man and Woman are united. Their joyous party festivity is saved by a miracle: water into wine, and the guests say, “you have saved the best wine for last.”

“Behold”, says the Christ in the Book of Revelation, “I make all things new.”

**Please prepare St. Mark 1: 14-20 for next Sunday.**

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<sup>1</sup> We might remember that despite the mythological content of Genesis and it’s naive idea that all happened in one week, the ultimate Author of all Creation is God who created everything that exists from nothing.

## THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY



**The Apostle Bartholomew  
(often identified with Nathanael)**

**Bernardo Pinturicchio, 1454–1513 Italian  
Tempera on wooden panel 59.6 x 51.0 cm.  
Princeton University Art Museum**

## RABBI, YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD!

Today's Gospel St. John 1: 43-51 [Year B, Epiphany2]

✠ THE NEXT DAY JESUS DECIDED TO GO TO GALILEE. HE FOUND Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you get to know me?' 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.' [© NRSV]

### Praying under the fig tree

*Jesus answered, I saw you under the fig tree*

What fig tree is Jesus talking about? It's not the small fig tree that is common in peoples' yards in warmer US climates. Such trees are rarely big enough to shelter a human. We are instead hearing of a large fig, probably *Ficus sycomorus*, the sycamore fig, that grows some 20 m. (60 feet) tall and 6 m. (18 feet) wide. It produces an edible but inferior fruit when compared to the common fig, *Ficus carica*. Both species have been cultivated in North Africa and Asia Minor for many thousands of years.

The sycamore fig was the tree tended by the prophet Amos who explained that *I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of*

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*Sycamore fig trees* (Amos 7:14). It was the sycamore fig that Zacchaeus climbed as Jesus passed through Jericho. Zacchaeus was small in stature. He was chief tax collector for the Romans. The position made him rich but also made him an outcast. In Luke, Chapter 9 we read:

He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a Sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.'

Sycamore figs were and are planted along streets to provide shade, but they also served another purpose in Bible times. Their shadow became a common place for prayer. Devout people went into the shade of the fig tree to meditate upon the Jewish law and to give themselves to God. Nathanael's response gives us reason to believe that he was meditating upon the coming of the Messiah.

Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you get to know me?' 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'

### New Beginnings in Seven Days

Our Sunday Gospels are arranged in a three year cycle. We're now in "Year B", the year when readings from Mark's Gospel are the usual Bible selections. Today is one of the several exceptions to the Mark readings. Each year on this, the Second Sunday of Epiphany, we read from John's Gospel. On each of these Sundays we hear the events of the first seven days of Christ's ministry.

Last year, "Year A", we heard John 1:29-41. In that passage John the Baptist identified the Christ. He said '*Look, here is the Lamb of God!*' The passage continued with the call of Andrew, the call of Peter and the call of *the Disciple that Jesus loved*.