

August 24, 2024

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW AND KOBE BRYANT

By Robert Cogswell

Today's Gospel

*Philip found Nathanael and told him,
“We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law,
and also the prophets, Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth.”
But Nathanael said to him,
“Can anything good come from Nazareth?”
Philip said to him, “Come and see.”
Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him,
“Here is a true child of Israel.
There is no duplicity in him.”
Nathanael said to him, “How do you know me?”
Jesus answered and said to him,
“Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree.”
Nathanael answered him,
“Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel.”
Jesus answered and said to him,
“Do you believe*

*because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree?
You will see greater things than this.”
And he said to him, “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 1:45-51

Reflection

Today is the Feast of St. Bartholomew, the Apostle also known as Nathanael. St. Bartholomew was a member of the most important cohort in the history of history. He was a missionary to India and Armenia, where he is a patron saint. We're not sure how he may have died, but all three stories are unpleasant at best. In the reading above, he had a transformational moment. St. Bartholomew gave his full measure to share the Good News.

Today is also a day of remembrance for another Catholic, Kobe Bryant. August 24 is Kobe Bryant Day as designated by two counties – Los Angeles and Orange – a reference to two numbers he wore as a professional basketball player for the Los Angeles Lakers, 8 and 24. Kobe tragically died in a helicopter crash along with his daughter Gianna (Gigi) and seven others in January 2020.

It is easier to reflect on Kobe Bryant because he's part of our living memory and internationally famous. There are more than 600 murals painted of Kobe, including **nearly 350 in Los Angeles alone**. Five championships, two gold medals, and in the conversation as one of the best players ever will enflame adoration like that.

For all the hype, Kobe was very human. He came to the NBA at 17. A hyper-competitive teenager in a man's league does not translate to making many friends. His work ethic drove people crazy – including teammates. Heaven help you if you were on the other team. He was also accused of sexual assault by a woman who was not his wife. The fall from grace played out in international media and must have been torture for a couple who appeared authentically hurt and in need of reconciliation. (They did reconcile and began to grow their family.)

Kobe Bryant Day, to me, is not about exploits on the court. It is about a human being figuring his life out and making changes. He concluded his playing career like a weight came off his shoulders. His fierce snarl and distance with media gave way to a light and happy countenance. Why the transformation? Faith and

family.

Stories of Kobe offering encouragement began to surface. Players facing devastating injuries began getting uplifting calls from the guy you did not want to play against. What was most special was observing the relationship with his daughters. Kobe heightened awareness of being a “girl dad” – a gentleman who earns trust through presence and reliability, serving as a compassionate teacher, and nurturing self-esteem in his daughters and others. He was becoming an advocate for female athletes; a global influencer who could dismantle societal misogyny was beginning to emerge before tragedy struck.

Celebrate Kobe Bryant Day not for his on-the-court exploits, but as a person who was evolving and finding new purpose by pouring into others. And that is the connection to St. Bartholomew: transformation at any point in life is possible. May you find a transformational moment in your life and discover how you can use your gifts to benefit people in our global community.



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For Pondering

- What stands in the way of you being a light to others?
 - Who might benefit from a little extra time with you?
 - When, where and how might your presence make a difference in someone's faith life?
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For Prayer

Loving God, You see my authentic self.

Clear the noise so I can hear Your call.

Help me to reflect on my life with wisdom and compassion.

Bring me comfort where I may find flaws and pain.

Let me celebrate joy and sense Your happiness with me.

Reveal how I can empty myself and be filled with You.

Guide my response to You to benefit my sisters and brothers.

May my transformation be a delight to You.

Amen.

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