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Remembering Philip and James, Apostles

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Remembering Philip and James, Apostles
Based on John 14: 8-14
A play for actors and singers by John Steven Paul
Developed in workshop by Soul Purpose,
The Liturgical Drama Troupe of the Valparaiso University Theatre
At Morning Prayer, Chapel of the Resurrection, Valparaiso University
Thursday, May 1, 2003

*for Nicholas Wolterstorff
and the Members of the "Wolterstorff Seminar" at Calvin College,
Summer 2002*

PHILIP.

This is for Philip

JAMES.

and James

KRISTIN.

the Less

MARY.

This is to remember the apostles St. Philip and St. James.

KRISTIN

The Less.

JAMES.

Why "the Less"?

KRISTIN

It helps us keep our Jameses straight.

JAMES

You can't keep the names of twelve people in mind?

KRISTIN.

Let's see. *(to the audience)* Quick. Name the twelve apostles. To yourself. *(pause)* umm
hmmm. We need all the help we can get.

JAMES.

Sounds like it.

(beat. The play begins.)

MARY.

You *(to JAMES)* looked a lot like Jesus. Almost like a twin brother.

PHILIP.

Some say.

JAMES.

That resemblance almost got me into trouble one night in the Garden of Gethsemane.

MARY.

And you were one of the very first disciples? Remember?

PHILIP.

I went and found Nathaniel. "Come and see," I said.

MARY.

And you were both with us all the way through until the end.

JAMES.

Celebrated the Passover in that upstairs room.

MARY.

Where were you on the next day, the *Friday*? We couldn't find you.

PHILIP.

What was the use?

JAMES.

What was the need?

PHILIP.

I couldn't bear it.

JAMES.

I was afraid.

(beat.)

KRISTIN.

Excuse me, can we remember your works, your deeds, your exploits?

PHILIP.

I preached in Samaria!

JAMES.

I became the first bishop of Jerusalem!

MARY.

Really?

JAMES.

(caught) Some say. It's a little tricky sorting out all the Jameses.

PHILIP.

We started as disciples.

JAMES.

And became Apostles.

PHILIP.

There were just a few of us in Jerusalem.

MARY.

One hundred twenty.

JAMES.

And now there are millions of us! Around the world.

KRISTIN.

Please? How did it happen? How did you do it?

PHILIP.

(bravado) Sheer, dogged persistence.

JAMES.

Guts.

PHILIP.

Raw courage.

JAMES.

Recklessness.

PHILIP.

Fearlessness.

JAMES.

(Takes a breath as if to continue)--

MARY.

(has had enough) Gentlemen. Let's remember a day, a particular day. *(KRISTIN is disappointed.)*

PHILIP.

Which day?

MARY.

The day you asked for ... satisfaction ... from Jesus.

PHILIP.

Oh, yes, that day.

MARY.

“...show us the Father and we will be satisfied.” Remember? I thought to myself, well, that’s going pretty far.

JAMES.

It was always all about you, as I remember.

PHILIP.

Wait. Wait a minute. Yes, I asked the question, but it was on all of our minds. Thomas spoke first, remember? Lord, he said, we do not know where you are going. We do not know the way.

MARY.

Jesus had just spoken so vividly about going to prepare a dwelling place for us.

JAMES.

Thomas wanted a street address. So disappointing for Jesus.

PHILIP.

Come on, we all wondered. None of us knew the way.

KRISTIN.

I can sympathize. I—few of us are...sure...of the way.

MARY.

Jesus said “I am the way.”

PHILIP.

And nobody understood what that meant. More code. Remember the muttering, the protests, the calls for quiet? It was getting ugly. So, I just asked him

MARY.

Demanded is more like it.

PHILIP.

Whatever. I was frustrated. “Show us the Father,” I said. I didn’t even know what I was asking or what I expected. Did I think that Jesus was going to say, “OK, tomorrow, we’ll pay a visit to the Father. He’s not far from here.” Or, maybe, “Close your eyes everybody...no peeking...and when you open them, the Father will be standing right here in front of you.”

JAMES.

That’s actually what he said, wasn’t it?

PHILIP.

What?

JAMES.

Close your eyes and open your EYES. Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

PHILIP.

Talk about disappointment. I’d been looking at him for years. Then *he* had a question for *me*: “Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?”

(pause.)

KRISTIN.

How did you answer?

PHILIP.

I didn’t right then because I couldn’t speak. I looked at Jesus again and I began to see the Father, just like he said. Here was God in the person of a man I knew and who knew me, who I’d walked and talked with. Who I’d worked with to feed the hungry and heal the sick. God, not *invisible*, but very, very visible.

MARY.

God, a baby in a manger; God a dying man on a cross.

KRISTIN.

It must have been amazing to be there. I wish I would have been. It would have made remembering easier now. Wouldn't it?

PHILIP.

I suppose it would. I never forgot. It was on that day that the living presence of God became real for me. The memory of that day sustained me through times of discouragement, suffering and the shadow of death.

JAMES.

(to KRISTIN) You needn't remember alone, you know. The Church is a community of memory.

MARY.

The church's purpose is to remember together. Like we're doing today.

KRISTIN.

That's nice—I mean, that's really important. But I want to do things. Not just remember. Isn't the church a community of action?

PHILIP.

Jesus said more that day. "...the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do..."

KRISTIN.

Now we get to remember the works! Proclamation, healings, feedings. Great risks and hair's breadth 'scapes.

JAMES.

Martyrdom, death. Only our bones survived.

PHILIP.

"...the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these *because* I am going to the Father."

MARY.

So, you see, if there were no passion, no death, no resurrection, and no ascension—there would be no great works.

JAMES.

This was a hard teaching. It was almost impossible for us to understand.

MARY.

But, it was true then and now.

KRISTIN.

This is all so abstract; so distant; so irrelevant, no disrespect. What can I do with it?

JAMES.

Anything.

KRISTIN.

Anything?

MARY.

You can ask Jesus for anything.

PHILIP.

“If in my name you will ask me for anything, I will do it.”

KRISTIN.

He said that to *you*.

PHILIP.

That’s right. And, by remembering me, you close the distance somewhat; you invite me here to say it to you face to face. (PHILIP says it directly to KRISTIN) If in *his* name you will ask *him* for anything, *he* will do it.

KRISTIN.

You were his apostles: St. Philip and St. James-- I’m only...

PHILIP.

Remember that before we were “Apostles” we were Jesus’s disciples – his students. And, not very good ones at that.

MARY.

There were days on which you were particularly...dense.

JAMES.

But together, a few of us teaching, praying, remembering, we did...

PHILIP.

Sharing, feeding, healing, we did...

MARY.

They did great works!

(Beat. Out of the play.)

PHILIP.

Remember Philip.

JAMES.

Remember James.

MARY.

At least once a year.

KRISTIN.

And pray in Jesus name.

END