



Vox Populi
24 August 2023

Today, 24 August, we celebrate the feast of St Bartholomew, one of the Twelve Apostles, mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke and also in Acts.

Besides being listed as an Apostle, he is not otherwise mentioned in the New Testament, at least not under the name Bartholomew: Many ancient writers, and Catholic tradition have identified Bartholomew as Nathaniel in the Gospel of John (John 1:45-51, and 21:2). Nathaniel is introduced to Jesus by his friend Phillip, and Jesus says of him "Here is a true child of Israel. There is no duplicity in him (1:47)."

We are presented with the Apostle's character in this brief and beautiful dialogue with the Lord Jesus. He is a good Jew, honest and innocent, a just man, who devotes much time to quiet reflection and prayer - "under the fig tree (1:48)" - and has been awaiting the Messiah, the Holy One of God.

Being "a true child of Israel," Nathaniel was a man well-read in the Scriptures and knew what they said of the Messiah and where he would come from. This is why he is sceptical of Phillip's claim that Jesus is the Messiah, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth (1:46)?"

But Nathaniel was lacking "duplicity" - that is, his heart was undivided, his intentions pure - his openness to reality was always ready to recognize and surrender to the truth when he encountered it. He remained open to his friend Phillip's invitation to "Come and see (1:46)."

In encountering Jesus and hearing His words, he found himself face to face with the Truth Himself, and in a clear and simple confession of faith said, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

Jesus, in Matthew 5:8, says, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." In Nathaniel we have an example of the pure man who sees - recognizes - God when confronted with Him, and on seeing Him believes in Him, and upon believing in Him, follows Him.

Nothing is known for sure about the life of Nathaniel/Bartholomew after the Ascension of Jesus, but tradition holds that he preached in the East and died a martyr's death in Armenia, being flayed alive for having won converts to the Lord Jesus.

This Saint shows us we can come to know God better in reflection through prayer
This day is also one for celebration and thanks for Bishop Anthony Randazzo who was appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney, consecrated and installed on 24 August 2016, three years later being appointed Bishop of Broken Bay.