

Vox Populi

19 August 2026

On 24 August we celebrate the feast day of one of the lesser-known 12 Apostles of Jesus – St Bartholomew.

Scholars believe he was a man of Cana of Galilee, however we have no special information about Bartholomew; his name is formulated with an explicit reference to his father's name, however it has traditionally been identified with Nathanael: a name that means "God has given."

Like other apostles he was probably a fisherman, and was a close friend with the Apostle Philip. It was Philip who suggested he meet Jesus and, after initial skepticism, Bartholomew embraced faith in Him with great enthusiasm and conviction.

In the Synoptic Gospels, he is presented as one of Jesus' closest disciples (Mark 3:18; Matthew 10:3; Luke 6:14), and in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:13), he appears with the other disciples witnessing Christ's appearance after the resurrection while fishing on the Sea of Tiberias.

In the writings of Saint John (John 1:43-51; 21:2), we encounter him as Nathanael, native of Cana, meaning "gift of God."

The first meeting with Jesus is recounted by Saint John. Jesus addresses him with these words: *"Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is no deceit."* Bartholomew, astonished, asks how Jesus knows him, and Jesus reveals: *"Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree."* We do not know what Jesus was referring to, what happened under the fig tree, but from that moment Bartholomew recognized Him as the Son of God and King of Israel. A few days later, Bartholomew participated with Jesus and the other disciples at the wedding feast in Cana, witnessing the first miracle of Jesus.

After Pentecost, Saint Bartholomew the Apostle set out to preach the Good News. He likely travelled to Lycaonia, a region in Cappadocia, and then ventured as a missionary

into the Middle East and India. Tradition says he was martyred by flaying and beheaded in Armenia.

In the *Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo painted St Bartholomew, who is holding his own skin in his left hand, on which the artist left his self-portrait.

Despite the scarcity of information about him, St Bartholomew shows us that attachment to Jesus can also be lived and witnessed without performing sensational deeds.