

Saint Bartholomew the Apostle – Feast Day – August 24

Saint Bartholomew was one of the twelve apostles of Jesus who is also called Nathanael or Nathaniel. He hailed from Cana in Galilee and was martyred in Armenia for converting Polymius, King of Armenia, to Christianity.

The name Bartholomew means Bar Talmi or the son of Talmi. Saint Bartholomew is mentioned in the three Synoptic Gospels in Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16, and Gospel of John he is identified as Nathanael in John 1:45-51, and 21:2. He is also mentioned in the Acts of Apostles in Acts 1:13-14.

Gospel of Matthew 10: 1 - 4

¹ Then he summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness.

² The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John;

³ Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus;

⁴ Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Gospel of Mark 3: 13 - 19

¹³ He went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him.

¹⁴ He appointed twelve [whom he also named apostles] that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach

¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons:

¹⁶ [he appointed the twelve:] Simon, whom he named Peter;

¹⁷ James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder;

¹⁸ Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean,

¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.

Gospel of Luke 6: 12 - 16

¹² In those days he departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God.

¹³ When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named apostles:

¹⁴ Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew,

¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot,

¹⁶ and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Acts of the Apostles 1: 13 - 14

¹³ When they entered the city they went to the upper room where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

¹⁴ All these devoted themselves with one accord to prayer, together with some women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Gospel of John 21: 2 & 1: 45 - 51

¹ After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way.

² Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples.

⁴⁵ 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."

⁴⁶ But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see."

⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him."

⁴⁸ 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."

⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

⁵⁰ 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."

⁵¹ And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

In the Gospel of John, Nathaniel is introduced as a friend to St Phillip who was also an apostle of Jesus. It was Phillip who introduced Nathaniel to Jesus and Jesus told him that he was a true child of Israel with no duplicity in him. This is because initially, Nathaniel was sceptical of Phillip's claim that Jesus is the Messiah when he said "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" But immediately after Jesus introduces himself, Nathaniel immediately believes and surrenders to Jesus.

Nathaniel lacking duplicity means that he had an undivided heart with pure intentions and was open to reality. He was always ready to see the truth and surrender to it when he encountered it. When he saw Jesus, 'The Truth Himself', he immediately surrendered and responded, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel."

Jesus depicts Nathaniel's character as a good Jew who is just, innocent and honest and a man who devotes much of his time to reflect quietly "under the fig tree" waiting for the Messiah, the Holy One of God.

After what is written in the Bible, the story of St Bartholomew resurfaces again after around three hundred years when Eusebius of Caesarea wrote that Bartholomew went on a missionary tour to India and left a Hebrew copy of the Gospel of Matthew. Other vague traditions say that Bartholomew evangelized as a missionary in Ethiopia, Egypt, Persia, Armenia, and Mesopotamia. Details of Saint Bartholomew's death are very unclear. Some traditions say that he was flayed (skinned) alive in Albanopolis in Armenia after he converted Polymius, the king of Armenia, to Christianity.

Saint Bartholomew is the Patron Saint of

- Armenia
- Gambatesa, Italy
- San Leonardo, Nueva Ecija, Philippines
- Nagcarlan, Laguna, Philippines
- Malabon, Metro Manila, Philippines
- Magalang, Pampanga, Philippines
- Catbalogan, Samar, Philippines
- Għargħur, Malta
- Los Cerricos (Spain)
- Barva, Costa Rica
- Whiteners
- Twitching
- Trappers
- Tanners
- Skin diseases
- Shoemakers
- Plasterers
- Neurological diseases
- Leather workers
- Florentine cheese and salt merchants
- Dermatology
- Couriers
- Butchers
- Bookbinders