



Anglican Catholic Church



## Diocese of the United Kingdom

Catholic Faith † Orthodox Worship † Apostolic Order

August 2023

*Dear friends and colleagues,*

24th August sees the feast day of St Bartholomew. What we mostly notice about St Bartholomew is that he almost fades into the background. He never stands out like Peter, James and John, but quietly goes about doing the work of the ministry with them as part of the team – spectacular work though it is, healing of sickness of body and mind, along with the preaching of the Gospel. And the Gospel appointed for his day closes with a promise of twelve thrones, one of them for Bartholomew.



Yet, even here he simply fits in with the other Apostles – blends in to the background.

And perhaps that is indeed the message. As John the Baptist said, all of us must decrease as Christ increases. This is because the focus is on the Lord Jesus. Anyone who has been a priest for any length of time has learned that it is never about us. In the Gospel we see that before Christ's death, burial and resurrection, and before the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, the Apostles argued about who would be the greatest. Their attitude in that story is far from the teamwork we see later when we read the Book of Acts, teamwork that accepted the obvious role of Peter as a chief spokesman and leader.

Bartholomew's full name was Nathaniel Bar-Tholomew (*Bar* was Aramaic for "son of"), (Nathaniel, son of Tolomaeus). In the first chapter of John's Gospel we read that Philip said to Nathaniel "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathaniel said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

We learn from this passage that Nathaniel was blunt. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" His answer was straight and to the point, but when given merely a *glimpse* of Christ's supernatural means of knowledge, he quickly believes.

Those who had been disciples of John the Baptist were quick to proclaim that Jesus was the Messiah, but the disciples all had yet to see the labour and effort that was involved with the work that lay before them. In the three years that followed, they would witness miracles and countless healings, and hear teaching that came from God, having such authority that none of the scribes and Pharisees could begin to match. They saw Jesus as the ladder from heaven to earth. But even on the night before the crucifixion they were in competition, each wanting to be esteemed the greatest.

There is no room for competition in the ministry Jesus had for them, or us, and no room for competition and ambition in His Church. Some would do well to remember that. We, like them, will learn that this work is for something greater than each person's wish to be seated at His right hand or His left. The lesson of Bartholomew is simple. Be content to serve among God's people in his Church.

*Fr. Raymond Thompson*

Archdeacon

Mobile: 07443 438465 Email: [rthompson@anglicancatholic.org](mailto:rthompson@anglicancatholic.org)

Diocesan website: <http://www.anglicancatholic.org.uk/>

Email: [diocesanoffice@anglicancatholic.org.uk](mailto:diocesanoffice@anglicancatholic.org.uk)

## Of prayer books and monarchs

Can it really be almost a year since the death of Queen Elizabeth II? There are still times when conducting our liturgy one has to remind oneself of the change of the monarch's name, and the occasional near-miss still happens!

Our excellent parish Mass books have just been reprinted, and the standard is as high as always, but there are changes to the text indicating that the Sovereign is now "Charles our King". There is, however, something rather evocative, if not romantic, about prayer books which contain the names of previous, long-departed monarchs. When I was a choirboy, back in the 'fifties, there were copies of the Book of Common Prayer in my parish church pews which had accumulated over the course of several reigns. There were none with the name of the then current Elizabeth of course. She hadn't been there long, and prayer books were expensive! Some contained the name of "Victoria our Queen", and there were some parishioners that were members of the congregation when that was the form in use. Remember that Victoria had been alive little more than 50 years before I became a chorister, so the fact that amongst the large congregation there were elderly life-long members who had been there since the 19<sup>th</sup> century was not at all remarkable. Our organist and choirmaster had been appointed during the reign of Edward VII, in 1908 (retiring in 1971). The other prayers for the Royal Family also make interesting reading, mentioning queens consort by name (Alexandra, Mary, Elizabeth) and also the various Princes of Wales and other senior royals. As an aside, it is interesting to reflect on a particular fact that would have meant a whole different set of names could have been in those books. The UK royal primogeniture laws were changed in 2015. Had they been that way in Queen Victoria's time her eldest daughter would have become sovereign, rather than Bertie, who was her second child and became Edward VII. Vicky (as she was known) would then not have married the future Emperor of Prussia, and her son, Wilhelm II (Kaiser Bill), would not have existed. Perhaps the two dreadful world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century might not have occurred. It is of historical record that one of the motivating factors behind Adolf Hitler's quest for domination was in retaliation for what he considered Germany's humiliation in 1918.

Be that as it may, and getting back on track, I used to delight in looking through those old BCPs and imagining the times, fashions and events that they had witnessed held in the hands of real people. Dark times of war and the influenza pandemic, and joyful times of celebration in nation and family. Hands that had followed their texts for weddings, funerals, and the weekly run of Matins, Evensong, and Holy Communion. Those old prayer books had acquired the same musty, atmospheric smell of history as the old churches in which they resided, and they had a certain venerable aura of sanctity about them which I rather miss.



*(My "desk picture" on the front page shows an Isle of Sheppey scene viewed from my desk, or from the garden, or within a few minutes of it.)*