

August 24

## FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT BARTHOLOMEW, APOSTLE

### 159.1 First Point

Saint Bartholomew had the honor of being one of the Apostles chosen by Jesus Christ himself.<sup>754</sup> In order to fill himself entirely with the Gospel truths, he always carried the Gospel of Saint Matthew with him on his journeys. This was the treasure in which he placed all his confidence for securing the salvation of the souls whom he converted in great numbers.

It is true that he had the abundant grace of the apostolate and that this was what worked in him and drew souls to God. But, as he was humble, he attributed the results of his preaching to the living and effective word of God,<sup>755</sup> which he drew from Saint Matthew's Gospel, much more than to anything he could say by himself. He knew that this divine word alone is able to make the division between the flesh and the spirit,<sup>756</sup> so necessary to bring about the entire conversion of a soul.

How fortunate you are to carry the holy Gospel with you at all times, for in it is found all the treasures of the knowledge and wisdom of Jesus Christ.<sup>757</sup> Be faithful to this practice. It is from this holy book that you must draw the truths which you must teach your disciples every day, in order to give them by this means the true spirit of Christianity. For the same reason, nourish your soul daily with the holy maxims contained in this wonderful book, and make them familiar to you by often meditating on them.

### 159.2 Second Point

When the holy apostles spread throughout the whole world in order to announce the holy Gospel to all the peoples of the earth,<sup>758</sup> this saint was assigned to go to preach the Gospel in Armenia and in the Indies, where he did very considerable good. He persuaded the king, the queen, and the whole royal family along with twelve whole cities in this kingdom to make public profession of the faith and the law of Jesus Christ. This won for him the esteem and veneration of all these people, who always looked upon him as an extraordinary man whom God had sent to withdraw them from their blindness and ignorance,<sup>759</sup> and to procure their salvation.

This is what the saint actually did through the preaching of the word of God and by frequent and assiduous prayer, which he offered in order to urge God to touch their hearts. Since this saint knew that he could not succeed in apostolic work without the special help of God, he applied himself very faithfully to prayer in order that God might give to all these people confided to him the grace to be docile to the word of Jesus Christ.

You have the advantage of sharing in the duties of the apostles by teaching catechism daily to the children under your guidance and by instructing them in the maxims of the holy Gospel. You will not do them much good, however, if you do not possess in full measure the spirit of prayer, which gives a holy fervor to your words and makes them able to penetrate very effectively the depths of the hearts of your students.

### 159.3 Third Point

The great number of conversions brought about by this saint drew down on him a great persecution by the priests of the idols, who were very opposed to the establishment of the Christian religion, and less inclined to listen to the word of God and profit by it. This led them to incite the king's brother in this nation to make an attempt on the life of Saint Bartholomew; they felt sure that if they caused this saint to die, they would destroy Christianity. But because this was God's own work, all their projects were ineffectual.<sup>760</sup>

This prince was so inhuman that, filled with hatred for Saint Bartholomew, he caused him to be flayed alive, and then cut off his head. We cannot conceive how much this Apostle suffered in his martyrdom, because to flay a man alive is one of the cruellest torments that could be inflicted on him. Yet this saint endured it with such patience that he seemed to be dead and no longer have feeling, because he was so filled with the Spirit of God that the interior feelings that enlivened his soul continually raised him to God and seemed to deprive his body of the feelings natural to it.

You have to suffer a constant martyrdom, which is no less violent for the spirit than Saint Bartholomew's was for his body. You must, so to speak, tear off your own skin which Saint Paul calls the old man, in order to be clothed with the spirit of Jesus Christ, which is, according to the same Apostle, the new man.<sup>761</sup> Let this, then, be your effort all throughout your life, that you may truly become disciples of Jesus Christ and imitators of this holy apostle in his martyrdom.

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Bartholomew, identified with Nathaniel, the friend of the Apostle Philip, was called by Jesus to be among the first Apostles (John 1:45ff). He is also mentioned in the account of Jesus' appearance to the Apostles by the side of the lake after the resurrection (John 21:2). He came from Cana, which may explain why he asked, Can anything good come from Nazareth? (John 1:46). Tradition has made him the Patron of Armenia, where he is said to have been martyred. His relics were transferred to Mesopotamia in the sixth century and from there to Beneventum in the ninth. There is also a church in Rome that claims his relics.

754 Jn 1:43ff

755 Heb 4:12

756 Heb 4:12

757 Col 2:3

758 Mk 16:15

759 Eph 4:18

760 Acts 5:39

761 Eph 4:22-24