

## Homily on St Bartholomew Day

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**“I am among you as one who serves.” Luke 22:27**

Let me start by telling you a familiar story...about a church member... let's call her **'our Margaret'**, but she could be anyone in **your** church.

'Our Margaret' was a faithful member of the congregation for many years. She never took a formal role in the leadership of the church, but she was always willing to help with making tea and coffee, bake cakes, and welcoming people to services and other church events. She loved arranging flowers, and cleaning, she could always be relied upon to have needle and cotton to hand when a button came loose, or a seam split in a cassock! When she died everyone said how much she would be missed in the life of the church.

But in the days before 'our Margaret's' funeral, as I talked to various people about her, I discovered hidden truths about Margaret's life. There was a young man who spoke of how Margaret had helped him with his reading and writing after he left school and then gave him advice and guidance about seeking employment. There was a former choir girl who had moved away from the parish when she got married, but her husband had been abusive, and Margaret had offered the girl a home as a refuge for the frightened young wife and soon-to-be mother.

There was a family who never forgot how Margaret had cooked meals for them while one of the children was seriously ill in hospital.

There were many more stories emerged of how 'our Margaret' had quietly served people around her, in ways that changed their lives and brought them love and care when they needed it most. We all know someone like 'our Margaret'

Today we celebrate St Bartholomew...a man 'our Margaret' identified with and loved,

Bartholomew is one of those Apostles who worked in the service of Jesus...Matthew, Mark, and Luke all name him as one of the twelve disciples called by Jesus to follow him, he is also named in the Book of Acts... but he is not mentioned anywhere else in the New Testament. There is some suggestion that Bartholomew may have been the same person as Nathaniel, who, John tells us, was brought to Jesus by Philip ...We assume that Bartholomew was Nathaniel, but we have no way of proving that this is true.

What we do know for certain about Bartholomew is that he shared, with the other disciples the experience of following Jesus throughout his ministry. He must have witnessed all that Jesus did and said, the way he acted, the way he dealt with the sick, the needy, and even those who were set on harming Jesus.

Jesus said to Bartholomew "You are one of those who have stood by me in my trials" whilst the others all failed me by running away at the time of my greatest trials.

Above all Bartholomew was a witness to the resurrection and ascension of Jesus and was therefore able to pass on the Gospel message, with the authority of one who had experienced it for himself.

Bartholomew must have heard again and again the teaching of Jesus that "the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves". He would have witnessed Jesus living out that teaching, **"I am among you as one who serves"**. Did Jesus wash the feet of Bartholomew?...who knows

No doubt after the resurrection of Jesus... Bartholomew and the other Apostles tried to live following the example that Jesus had set, thus bearing witness to others of Jesus' humility and loving service to all.

We may know very little about Bartholomew as an individual... but it's from him, and the other Apostles that we have received our faith, our love for God, and the ability to serve other with that love, that willingness, that kindness, that care, that humility, that Jesus taught...

Like the first believers and disciples, 'our Margaret' was faithfully devoted to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, devoted to the breaking of bread and the prayers, devoted to serving others, to being humble, devoting herself to following Jesus, to walking in his footsteps...she lived out her faith as "one who serves" others.

After 'our Margaret's' death, we found in her Bible a well-worn card with the prayer of St Ignatius of Loyola written on it.

This prayer was written long after the life of Bartholomew... and over 400 years before our lifetime... but perhaps it's a prayer we can all still pray together... it's stood the test of time, it extends beyond the realms of culture, religion, class, it breaks down barriers between men and women everywhere in the world, everyone who call Jesus their Lord and Saviour.

So... With St. Bartholomew, St. Ignatius, and 'our Margaret', along with everyone reading this today,

let us pray:

Teach us, good Lord,  
to serve you as you deserve,  
to give and not to count the cost,  
to fight and not to heed the wounds,  
to toil and not to seek for rest,  
to labour and not to ask for any reward,  
save that of knowing that we do your will"

Amen.