

Bishop's letter Manna - August 2025

Do you use Wikipedia? It's often a very convenient place to look for information when we want to know more about something or about a person. But, perhaps, like me you've discovered its limitations. As you might anticipate from a free online encyclopaedia to which anyone can contribute and is open to anyone to edit it is both impressively collaborative and also sometimes incomplete or less than fully accurate. Nevertheless, it remains for me – and perhaps you? – a go-to source of quick information.

So, I wasn't surprised when I consulted Wikipedia's 'August anniversaries' to find it is less than comprehensive about the Christian calendar this month. St Bartholomew's Day is recorded on 24 August – alongside Ukraine Independence Day which surely also deserves marking. Bartholomew (usually identified as Nathanael, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus) isn't generally well celebrated on his festival day, except in places where he's the patron saint of the parish and church, such as Crewkerne where the annual charter fair remembers their link with St Bart. Even so their fair has been moved into September after the end of the holiday season.

August frequently means reduced activity, and fewer events. If that's an opportunity for catching our breath and taking a break from the challenges of deadlines and expectations, then all well and good. But let's not forget, despite them being omitted from the Wikipedia list, the other red-letter August days in the calendar. On 15 August we honour the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of our Lord Jesus, and on the 6 August, we mark the glorious Transfiguration of our Lord. That festival day recalls how Peter, James and John experienced on a mountain top the transformation of Jesus' physical appearance, enabling them to glimpse the glory of his divinity.

Make the most of these three significant festival days in August. As well, don't forget the other significant days this month, such as Ukraine Independence Day (24), VJ day (15) marking the end of World War 2, and – another date missed in the Wikipedia list – the 80th anniversary of the dropping of the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Saints' days and anniversaries are significant prompts to our prayers.

Bishop Christopher Foster