



St. Matthew

On Monday, September 21, we will celebrate the feast of the Evangelist and Apostle St. Matthew. For good reasons St. Matthew has always held a special place in my heart. The most important reason being that I was named after him and he is the Saint's whose name I took at my confirmation.

St. Matthew stands out for me amongst the Apostles in another way as well. He was a publican, i.e. a tax collector. The tax collectors were some of the most despised of all. They were considered to be traitors by their Jewish brothers and sisters because they worked for and with the Romans. Tax collectors were also allowed to keep anything over the required tax they were able to collect, so in essence they were thieves in the eyes of their countrymen. Therefore the fact that Our Blessed Lord would call one of them to be His Apostle speaks boldly of His mission.

Again and again throughout the Gospel we hear Our Lord telling us that He has come to call sinners not the righteous and the Call of Matthew is truly one of those moments. It should give us all hope since we recognize from the words of St. Paul that, "All of us sin and fall short of the glory of God." Matthew's call is a certain reminder that no matter who we are or who we have been all can be forgiven and we like him are good enough to follow Christ.

I often imagine in my mind that day. I see Matthew sitting amongst the despised publicans counting the money they have raised. More than likely he was doing something he did not want to do but was forced to do because of necessity. He was without hope; he was shunned by his family and friends. Then suddenly all of that changed. Our Blessed Lord walked up to him and said "Follow me". And In the Ninth Chapter of Matthew's Gospel it says that he got up and followed Him. He didn't question; he didn't think about the costs; he never looked back; he simply got up and followed Him.

I think the message is clear to all of us. No matter where we are in life. No matter what we have done or how we have failed God, ourselves or others, there is always a place for us at the table of the Lord. We must simply rise from where we are and follow Him. That is why I am proud to bear his name and why he is one of my favorite Apostles is because he reminds all of us that if we go where our Lord leads all of us will be welcomed into His Kingdom and at His Table.

God, You chose St. Matthew the Publican to become an Apostle. By following his example and benefiting by his prayers, may we always follow and abide by Your will. Amen.

In Christ,

Fr. Long