

Tuesday of the twenty-fifth week in Ordinary Time Year 1

Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist



First Reading

Eph 4:1-7. 11-13

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians

It was his gift that some should be apostles, others evangelists.

I, the prisoner in the Lord, implore you to lead a life worthy of your vocation. Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as you were all called into one and the same hope when you were called. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God who is Father of all, over all, through all and within all.

Each one of us, however, has been given his own share of grace, given as Christ allotted it. And to some, his gift was that they should be apostles; to some, prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; so that the saints together make a unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ. In this way we are all to come to unity in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of God, until we become the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 18:2-5. R. v.5

(R.) Their message goes out through all the earth.

1. The heavens proclaim the glory of God
and the firmament shows forth the work of his hands.
Day unto day takes up the story
and night unto night makes known the message. **(R.)**
2. No speech, no word, no voice is heard
yet their span extends through all the earth,
their words to the utmost bounds of the world. **(R.)**

Gospel

Mt 9:9-13

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Follow me. And standing up, he followed him.

As Jesus was walking on he saw a man named Matthew sitting by the customs house, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

While he was at dinner in the house it happened that a number of tax collectors and sinners came to sit at the table with Jesus and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When he heard this he replied, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. Go and learn the meaning of the words: What I want is mercy, not sacrifice. And indeed I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners.'

Homily—Fr Graham Fullick

It may seem unusual at first that Jesus says to the Pharisees (repeating Hosea 6:6) “What I want is mercy not sacrifice”. Our Lord goes on to institute in Himself the Eternal Sacrifice of His merciful presence in the Mass which begins with the Last Supper (the first Mass), is endowed with His Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity on the Cross with Him Priest and Lamb of Sacrifice, and ends with the Resurrection! He says “Do this in memory of me”. Jesus did want and submitted to be the Sacrifice of Mercy. But that was after he had abolished in Himself the Old Covenant of substitute sacrifice of sin offerings of slaughtered animals and scape goats and had become in establishing Himself as the New Covenant, the Living, Eternal Sacrifice.

The sacrifice that Jesus was doing away with was the representative, symbolic sacrifice of man’s things of nature to God—virtuous and proper as that was righteous in the Law of the Old dispensation—and being a New Nature, a pure creation Himself: God visiting His people. Christ need not offer any sacrifice for forgiveness of His sins, but He came to St. Matthew and us to save us from our sins once and for all. The atoning offering of perfection is Jesus Christ who is the perfection who is God and of humanity’s nature, fallen and now restored in the Resurrection from the dead of evil and sin. The coming of God to earth in the Real Presence who is Jesus IS the act and deed of Mercy.

When Jesus says “What I want is mercy not sacrifice” he is saying to the Pharisee and to us unreservedly:

1. Be merciful as I am being merciful by coming to you in and from My Heavenly Father;
2. Only God makes righteous, not us, we are not full of grace, but fallen. God raises us up;
3. As it is before My Death and Resurrection, Old Law substitute sacrifices are to be done away with;
4. The post-Resurrection and New Sacrifice is myself for your justification and righteousness, unmerited by you, but Merited by My mercy alone, for I am Steadfast, Eternal Mercy in a Person on earth now as in Heaven;
5. I am in Myself Mercy. What I want to be is merciful. I do not want to be The Sacrifice, but if it is My Father’s will, then I will it because We are One; and
6. Forgive as you have been forgiven because you are sinful and made righteous by Me and none Other -accept the Salvation I Am and live in My Love.

Matthew, prompted by the Holy Spirit said “yes”, though he did not know the ramifications then of Who and what he was saying yes to. The Pharisee refused to be prompted by the Grace of the Holy Spirit.

St. Matthew would have been seen as a wicked collaborator with the Roman occupying authorities, even though he was an observant Jew. He would have been shunned, despised and indeed was in their zealous eyes a public sinner. The reprobation against him was at least as much political as spiritual. And that is the point. All have sinned and fallen short of the mark of God’s pure righteousness in Jesus. Yet Jesus the Eternal Word speaks His words of merciful love to tax collector and Pharisee alike. There is no preference or hierarchy of fallen, Lapsed, Original Sin humanity! We are all there. The greatest Good News is that Christ has come for all of us and speaks to us. Humility is sitting at the feet of the Master, Jesus listening and following, dining even with Jesus the Heavenly Banquet of Mercy in a Person spread out over the entire human race. Our tax collected is illness, suffering, deprivation, over-abundant gluttony, greed: death! We ourselves cannot pay ourselves out of that. Only Jesus can forgive the actual sins and overcome the burden of the tax of this life: He is the Merciful One who redeems and repays our indebtedness in a Jubilee of Mercy.

Sin then is a refusal to accept this Mercy: Jesus the Mercy in front of us, by comparing ourselves to others, rather than the Eternally Redeeming Lord whom we are not worthy to receive, but acknowledging this truth and saying: “But only say the word, “Jesus Mercy” and we shall be saved to enter both the paradise of Mass and Eternity.

Let us be humble like St. Matthew, listen and trust in the Lord and as St. Paul says to the Ephesians today (Eph 4:1-7, 11-13) “Live a life worthy of your vocation. Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience.