

Friday's Gospel: "He rose and followed him"

Gospel for Friday in the 13th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 9:9-13*)

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him.

And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the

Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Commentary

Jesus, step by step, carries out the Father's will to establish the Kingdom of Heaven. To assist him, he gives some a special mission, such as the Apostles, whom he makes the foundation of the Church.

Among them is Matthew. When the day appointed by God from all eternity arrives, Jesus passes by and looks at him. And by that look Jesus

calls him, in a choice made from all eternity.

The same thing happens with us men and women. God chooses us from all eternity to be saints, on a specific path, and at a specific moment in our life the call takes place.

The choice and call are free. But the answer depends on us, on our freedom. Matthew's reply was immediate: "he rose and followed him." That is what God wants, that we respond generously and promptly to his call. It is easy to do so if, through prayer, our heart is open to listening to what God wants to tell us.

When he receives the call, Matthew invites Jesus into his house. Jesus calls us to invite us to share in his friendship, so that we can live in close familiarity with him.

Many tax collectors and sinners were also present in Matthew's house,

which scandalized the Pharisees. But Jesus has come to announce God's mercy: "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice."

Jesus chooses and calls freely. He calls us as sinners to be his friends. He does so through his mercy and the forgiveness that his welcoming heart offers us.

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