September 21: Saint Matthew, Evangelist and Apostle

Gospel for September 21st, feast of Saint Matthew, 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

How would Christ have looked at people in a way that radically changed their heart and healed it?

Jesus walks through the narrow streets of Capernaum and makes his way with determination to the place where Levi the publican is working, a man who collects taxes for the Romans and is hated by his fellow citizens as a traitor.

He stops and looks at Levi with his eyes filled with mercy, like no one had looked at him before. And Levi realize that his heart has been healed, filled now with hope.

In Christ's eyes Levi sees the look of a God who sees much more deeply than we do. Christ sees beyond our sins, our failures, our unworthiness. In Levi, Jesus sees Matthew. He sees his future life of service and self-giving, his fidelity and happiness.

Today too Jesus wants to look at us in this way. "That's how I explain Christ waiting in the Eucharist. It is God waiting for us, God who loves us, who searches us out, who loves us just as we are – limited, selfish, inconstant, but capable of discovering his infinite affection and of giving ourselves fully to him" (St. Josemaría, *Christ is Passing By*, no. 151).

Jesus’ encounter with Matthew challenges us and encourages our trust. If Jesus could transform a tax collector into a disciple, a traitor into his intimate friend, he can also transform us sinners into children of God, into his intimate friends.

But we have to respond like Matthew. We need to realize that we are sick and in need of that divine look that instills hope in us because it sees in each one of us, who are poor sinners, the person dreamed of by God.

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