

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, May 14th 2016

Feast of Saint Matthias, Apostle

Today is the feast day of St. Matthias. Perhaps not a saint that we often think of, but one who has an important place in the early church. Our first readings tells of his story and becoming an apostle. The gospel is one of my favorites – it is a story of hope and love although a hard lesson to always live on a daily basis.

The first reading from the Acts of the Apostles updates us as to the goings on of the apostles in the early days after the crucifixion. We see Peter taking the lead and many faithful followers gathered together. They recognize the need to fill the vacancy left by Judas' betrayal and subsequent suicide and refer to Scriptures to validate their actions. As they consider many of the faithful followers, two men rise to the top: Barsabbas and Matthias. As lots were cast, Matthias "won." I think about how we all are chosen to be disciplines and to be responsible for spreading the Good Word. We don't have to wait for lots to be cast – we have been saved and directed to go forth. I love the quote attributed to St. Francis, Preach the gospel at all times, when necessary use words. Clearly, we are to live our lives in such a way that we are living proof of the Savior. I remember one of the first songs we sang when after Vatican II, we had "folk masses." It was They will know We are Christians by our Love. In other words, our actions should be sufficient to show who we really are and what we believe.

The song I mention above leads us beautifully into the message of the gospel. It is a gospel full of messages of love. In fact, love is mentioned seven times in the first ten lines!! It seems that Jesus is trying to make a point here – but are we listening? The line is simple: Love one another as I love you. Yet the simplicity of the words belie the difficulty of living them. Even as we deeply love family members and close friends, there are times when their actions and words may not be loveable and we are challenged to react in a loving way. For the most part, we do remember how much we love them and can get beyond the issues at that time. The greater challenge, for me at least, is to always show that love to others, to strangers, to those who do not want to be friends or even friendly. I am blessed to have a career spanning 45 years that has allowed me many opportunities to show my love for others. In the intimate relationship of rendering care to others at the most vulnerable times in their lives, I can willingly and, fairly, easily show love through my actions and caring touch and attitude. In my teaching nursing for nearly 43 years, I have also been able to freely show that caring and love, at times challenged to the max to keep that attitude and remember the commandment. I have the unique opportunity to role model that attitude and caring to a new generation of nurses. I have the opportunity perhaps even the mandate to break my students' hearts. Not to break them in pieces but to break them open to the world so that they are never the same. I have this same obligation to my family and friends – to challenge them to open their hearts.

For the last seven years I have been privileged to be involved with Ignatian Spirituality Project retreats

for the homeless in recovery from addictions. I have the opportunity to freely give of my heart as I join their journey of this struggle. Yet, do I freely love the stranger who cuts me off in traffic or as I read of violence, am I able to think of all as children of God struggling with life. Perhaps they are full of fear instead of love and have a void in their lives at this point. This kind of loving challenges me – it forces me to look beyond my needs and wants and comfort zones. To look and try to understand the path that others take without judging and with forgiveness. It is a challenge I will continue to face as I walk this journey called life.

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