

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jul 7th 2017

“I did not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Mt 9:13).

Today’s Gospel really made me think. It presents a disconcerting picture of Jesus and a disconcerting picture of the people he chose to be his closest disciples.

We would suspect that when choosing his closest disciples Jesus would go first to the religious figures in his culture. Wouldn’t we expect him to choose first from among the priests who officiate at the temple services and also from among the Pharisees who are the official teachers and interpreters of the Jewish law? Yet there is no evidence that he called members of either group to be among his closest disciples.

Whom did he choose? Matthew, the author of today’s Gospel, indicates that he went to tax collectors -- like himself -- and to “sinners” -- folks officially ostracized by official Judaism because of non-observance of aspects of Jewish Torah.

Jesus doesn’t seem to care what official status one has in society; he does however seem to care deeply about who you are as a person. In fact he seems attracted primarily to those with little or no status in society. Jesus seems attracted to peasants, fishermen, children, women, the physically and mentally impaired – yes even outcasts and “sinners.”

Today’s Gospel prompted me to ask: To whom would Jesus be attracted to today? Whom would he call to be his closest disciples?

Do we ostracize and demean certain groups of people whom Jesus himself might be specially drawn to?

Today’s Gospel got me wondering.

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