



Essential Evangelization

St. Matthew

In this Sunday's Gospel reading, we hear Jesus tell us that we can't live with a "split" personality or a divided life. You can't love and serve God and money too. Your heart will be dominated by one or the other. This week we also celebrate the feast day of one of the followers of Jesus who had a great deal to do with money, St. Matthew. His feast day is this Tuesday, September 21st. Matthew was Levi, the former tax collector, turned Apostle, turned Gospel writer, and as tradition has it, gave his life as a martyr for Our Lord.

Matthew was born a Jew, the son of Alpheus, in Syria. He got a job as a tax collector, collecting custom duties for Herod Antipas in Capharnaum, and was disliked by the religious leaders, since they hated all publicans as traitors of their Jewish religion. In the Gospel we hear that Matthew even got Jesus in trouble by throwing a going away party for him at his house. The Pharisees were shocked and wagged their tongues saying that Jesus hung around with sinners.

But Jesus must have seen deeper into the heart of Matthew and thought him holy enough for the very important job of Apostle. And Matthew must have been open enough to recognize the Truth too when he saw it, because when called, he simply and decisively left the tax collecting behind, and "got up and followed him." Ironically, many years later Matthew wrote his Gospel especially for the same Jews that hated him. His Gospel account highlights how Jesus really was the Messiah and became the fulfillment of their Hebrew scriptures, or the Old Testament. St. Irenaeus tells us that after the Resurrection, Matthew went on to also evangelize the Hebrew community for 15 years and from there, tradition has it, that he went on to the Gentile nations of Ethiopia, Macedonia, Persia and Parthia.

Like our beloved Matthew, God knows our heart too and he loves us, regardless of where it is right now. Where is your heart right now? What's in your wallet? Can you leave whatever it is that dominates your life right now to very simply follow Him?

"So do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself."
Jesus as quoted by our beloved St. Matthew, Chapter 6, Verse 34

This is one of a series of articles
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