

Saint Matthew 21 September

Apostle and Evangelist — Holy Day

Today we honour Saint Matthew, a disciple and apostle of Christ who is traditionally believed to be the author of the first Gospel in the New Testament. According to that Gospel, Matthew was a tax-gatherer when Jesus called him; the Gospels according to Mark and Luke agree, but say that the tax-gatherer's name was Levi. It is probably one and the same person, the disciple we call Matthew.

In first century Judea, tax collectors were viewed as foul collaborators who extorted money from their own people in order to sustain the Roman occupation and enrich themselves. Matthew was an outcast in his own nation, so polluted by his job that he could not take part in the worship of Israel. The fact that Jesus consorted with the likes of Matthew, and even called him into his circle of disciples, was one of the things that scandalized his fellow Jews the most.

With such a background it may be ironic that the Gospel according to Matthew is considered the most Jewish of the four versions in the New Testament. It takes the greatest pains to show that Jesus was faithful to his Jewish heritage and constantly cites Old Testament texts to prove that he did not come to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them.

Matthew's Gospel is also the work of a true literary artist who not only wrote well but also knew how to organize his materials to their best advantage. These qualities have made it, down through the centuries, the favourite version for many of the preachers, teachers, and reading public of the Church.

See Readings, page 666.

Sentence

You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth. *Acts 1.8*

Collect

Almighty God,
who through your Son
called Matthew to be your apostle and evangelist,
free us from all greed and selfish love,
that we may follow in the steps of Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Proverbs 3.1-6 *or* 2 Timothy 3.14-17 Psalm 119.33-40
Refrain Instruct me in your statutes, O Lord. *Or v. 33 or CR 4*
Matthew 9.9-13

Prayer over the Gifts

Father,
accept all we offer you this day.
Guide us with your love
as you nourish the faith of the Church
by the preaching of your apostles.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Preface of Apostles

Prayer after Communion

God of mercy and compassion,
we have shared the joy of salvation
that Matthew knew when Jesus called him.
May this food renew our life in him
who came not to call the righteous
but sinners to salvation in his kingdom,
your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.