

JULY 2, 2021
Friday of the 13th Week in OT
Matthew 9: 9-13

“HIS PRESENCE CAN CHANGE US!”

What a dramatic call for Matthew, a tax collector and seen by others as corrupt, deceitful, cunning and dishonest person. This gospel the calling of Levi or Matthew follows the cure of the paralytic. Jesus performed a lot of cures and miracles, a sign which attracted people to follow Him and be His disciples. “Matthew/Levi was an unlikely disciple; he was a tax collector. Tax collectors were among the most despised group of people in Jewish society of the time. Tax collectors never can be particularly popular, given their distasteful job, but in Jesus’ time they were collecting taxes for the hated and pagan colonial ruler. As such they were seen as collaborators and traitors to their own people and to their religion.”¹ That is what they saw on Matthew but not for Jesus. He saw not those qualities but a heart of Matthew’s willingness to change and be an apostle of kindness and honesty. Jesus invites those considered unknown, despised, outcasted to be His own followers. This is an example that Jesus sees beyond exterior and stereotype and who the person is inside, his interior, his heart. Matthew’s call is a great model or instance that God calls and sees not the appearance but the heart like when He calls holy men and women, sinners and even simple people. Let us also look at the 12 apostles. They were full of weaknesses, faults and fragile in their belief but through the presence of Jesus, they end up doing something extraordinary. Jesus’ presence changed their lives.

Also, Jesus came not to call the virtuous but sinners, not the healthy who need the doctor but the sick. When the Pharisses saw Him with tax collectors and sinners, they questioned Him of being with the unclean people. For Pharisees, this can lead to make Him unclean too. “The problem is not of Jesus becoming contaminated by the sinful and the unclean but rather their becoming healed by His presence and influence. The legally minded (the ritualists) are only interested in themselves; those governed by love (the merciful) think primarily of the needs of

¹ livingspace.sacredspace.ie/

their brothers and sisters. There is no need for Jesus to spend time with the virtuous, with the already converted; it is those in spiritual and moral deprivation with whom He needs to spend His time.”²

My brothers and sisters, we are loved, important and valuable to God not because of our strength, power or capacity but rather for our frailty, docility, availability and openness to His words and will. So, let us come to Jesus in this Eucharist and offer all our weaknesses and vulnerability, surrender it all to Him and follow Him throughout our lives. Like Matthew and all sinners, we will be welcomed by Jesus, dine with us and heal us with His love, mercy and compassion.

² ibid