

FIFTH THURSDAY IN EASTERTIDE

14TH MAY 2020

St Matthias, Apostle was not one of the Twelve; but after the treachery and death of Judas Iscariot, someone was needed to take his place. Two candidates were selected, and lots were drawn to see which of them should be made one of the Twelve: the choice fell on Matthias. Nothing is known for certain about his subsequent history.



Drawing lots to select a candidate for an office sounds strange to us, but it was a recognised Jewish custom: for example, the priest who was to enter the Temple sanctuary and burn incense there was not chosen by some rota but by lot. Random events, independent of any obvious natural or human cause, were

seen as a direct expression of God's will. Drawing lots was not a substitute for human decision – human beings had chosen Matthias as a candidate, human beings decided which priests were eligible on which days – but a way of putting the final choice into the hands of God.

When we attain some high or responsible position, we may be tempted to congratulate ourselves on being the best candidate for the job. We would do well to remember that we have got there because of the people we have met and the things we have found ourselves doing, and, more fundamentally, because of the gifts and talents that God has given us. These things are essentially random. Like Matthias, we have been chosen by lot.

Text courtesy of Universalis. Painting by Peter Paul Rubens (1577 – 1640)

Reflection on the Readings: The Acts of the Apostles has long been recognised as the sequel to the Gospel of Luke & serves to record the beginnings of the Early Church & the mission of the first missionaries fired up by their time with Jesus. Acts documents the travels Of Saints Peter & Paul & those who accompany them like Saint Barnabus & Saint Mark. Matthias is appointed an apostle to make up the Twelve after the departure from the group of Judas Iscariot. Twelve represents the whole people or tribes of Israel.

Even after the Resurrection, the appearances of the Risen Christ to his closest friends & then his rising to heaven, the Apostles still lacked the steel to go out & preach. They are promised the Advocate - the Holy Spirit. In a few days we

will celebrate Pentecost, the day the Apostles & first followers of Jesus were empowered by the extraordinary energy of God's creative force. We are told it touched them like tongues of flame.

Perhaps every now and again, even if only for an instant, we can feel the sensation of being fully alive & totally awake, our senses tingling. Pentecost is not just an historic event. The Holy Spirit works in our days in us & in so many others. Generally this is not dramatic, but sometimes the power of the Holy



Spirit can be overwhelming like it was for those in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost. It is a gift & cannot be anticipated nor predicted.

The early community first called themselves followers of The Way. Later they came know to be Christians. Jesus is called 'Christ' because the word refers to being chosen & anointed. Various Old Testament characters are anointed as God specially chooses him for a particular role. Christ is Greek for Hebrew word giving the same idea - Messiah. We become Christians by being chosen & anointed at our baptism. The oil poured is called Chrism & is the same as that used during the Sacraments of Confirmation & Ordination to the Priesthood.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks to those around the meal in the Upper Room that they have been chosen, brought together to know God better. The message is for us to hear & understand too.

In the opening of the Gospel of Luke & Acts, Saint Luke addresses his account to **Theophilus**. Who is he?

Well, he could be any of us. It refers to anyone who loves God. It could mean you or me or our neighbour who starts the day with a prayer.

A Reading From the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 1: 1 – 26

In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything **Jesus** had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the **Holy Spirit**, and was taken up to heaven. He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God. When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. **'It is' he had said 'what you have heard me speak about: John baptised with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'**

Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, **'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth.'**

As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near them and they said, 'Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky? **Jesus** who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same **Jesus** will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there.'

So from the Mount of Olives, as it is called, they went back to Jerusalem, a short distance away, no more than a Sabbath walk; and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James. All these joined in continuous prayer, together with several women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

One day Peter stood up to speak to the brothers – there were about a hundred and twenty persons in the congregation: 'Brothers, the passage of scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit, speaking through David, foretells the fate of Judas, who offered himself as a guide to the men who arrested Jesus – after having been one of our number and actually sharing this ministry of ours. As you know, he bought a field with the money he was paid for his crime. He fell headlong and burst open, and all his entrails poured out. Everybody in Jerusalem heard about it and the field came to be called the Bloody Acre, in their language Hakeldama.'

'Now in the Book of Psalms it says:

*Let his camp be reduced to ruin,
Let there be no one to live in it.*

'And again:

Let someone else take his office.

'We must therefore choose someone who has been with us the whole time that the Lord Jesus was travelling round with us, someone who was with us right from the time when John was baptising until the day when he was taken up from us – and he can act with us as a witness to his resurrection.'

Having nominated two candidates, Joseph known as Barsabbas, whose surname was Justus, and Matthias, they prayed, 'Lord, you can read everyone's heart; show us therefore which of these two you have chosen to take over this ministry and apostolate, which Judas abandoned to go to his proper place'. They then drew lots for them, and as the lot fell to Matthias, he was listed as one of the twelve apostles.

THE WORD OF THE LORD

PSALM 112 (113)

**Praise, O servants of the Lord,
Praise the name of the Lord!
May the name of the Lord be blessed
Both now and for evermore!**

**From the rising of the sun to its setting
Praised be the name of the Lord!
High above all nations is the Lord,
Above the heavens his glory**

**Who is like the Lord, our God,
Who has risen on high to his throne
Yet stoops from the heights to look down,
To look down upon heaven and earth?**

(Canal tow path near The Leggers)



**Alleluia, alleluia!
I chose you from the world
to go out and bear fruit,
fruit that will last,
says the Lord.
Alleluia!**

**A Reading From the Holy Gospel
According to Saint John 15: 9-17**

Jesus said to his disciples,

'As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.
Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love.

I have told you this so that my own joy may be in you
and your joy be complete.

This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you.
A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.

You are my friends, if you do what I command you.
I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know
his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from my Father.

You did not choose me: no, I chose you; and I commissioned you
to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last;
and then the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name.
What I command you is to love one another.'

THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD