

# **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

## **Call to worship**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray:

Father, we offer to you this day, all our thoughts, words and actions, all our sufferings and disappointments, and all our joys, and we unite our lives with that of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

## **Confession**

Merciful God, we are sorry for our unfaithfulness to the love you show us by the gift of life and the greater gift of union with you through the grace of baptism. Lord, we beg you to forgive our sins and to heal the wounds that our sins have caused. We thank you, Lord, for your mercy that brought us to repent and for the forgiveness that you offer so freely when we truly repent.

(Silence)

## **Assurance of Pardon**

The almighty and merciful Lord forgives you from all your sins.

In gratitude we say:

God of love, give us a heart to love you and to love one another; through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour.

Amen

## **New Testament Reading:**

### **The Gospel of Matthew 9:9-13**

<sup>9</sup>As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

<sup>10</sup>And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax-collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. <sup>11</sup>When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax-collectors and sinners?' <sup>12</sup>But when he heard this, he said, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. <sup>13</sup>Go and learn what this means, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.'

***This is the word of the Lord***

## **Reflection**

Matthew must have experienced something really powerful indeed to leave the source of his income and go and follow Jesus. Clearly, he must have felt that Jesus was not just a prophet but the promised Messiah of God.

Today many people identify themselves with their jobs, their careers, their status in the family or in society. But then when a role comes to an end, (loss of a job or a person or a position), then they suffer an identity crisis and they feel lost and confused. When we think that way, one must wonder what makes a person leave the things that form their identity in their mind, their financial security and all that makes them who they are, just so that they can go and embrace a life that, in the eyes of the world, seems full of uncertainty and hardship.

Obviously, this person must have found a new identity, a new purpose, a new meaning of life, and therefore, a new way of life. Suddenly, those things that gave them the illusion of security and stability, power and control, don't make any sense anymore. Suddenly, the values have changed, the point of view has changed; before I was looking at life from the ground but now, I am flying and I am able to see further away from this height. Have you ever found yourself looking outside the window of the

aeroplane and thinking that the world and all its problems seem so irrelevant from so far in the sky?

Matthew, just like anyone called by Jesus, experienced this change of perspective, this eye-opening flash that makes everything clear in light of eternity. It is natural that when the Holy Spirit moves us to know Him, we rejoice and we want to embrace a new way, a new life. We want to embrace Jesus and all that He has to say to us.

Matthew, a tax collector, a sinner, a man that worked against his own people to selfishly accumulate possessions for himself, suddenly changed course in his life. Unlike the Pharisees, Matthew does not know all the correct practices of worship and the law; he does not know how to discriminate between good or bad people, he came from the bad lot. But he has a reason to rejoice because, even though he knows that he does not deserve this honour, God chose him as a disciple. Out of all the people, God chose him, a sinner.

The Pharisees and all those people engaged in practicing righteousness in their own eyes, look upon Matthew's record and they judge God! God is not good enough for them because He is doing something that goes against their expectations. He has mercy on the sinner. "How can this be?" they wonder; "we are righteous, we follow the law and this Jesus calls a sinner?!"

But their understanding falls short of God's standard, their point of view is too in-line with the ways of the world. Jesus replies to them with a double-edged sword, cutting through the hypocrisy of following the law without love and mercy on one side, and on the other side, indicating that God comes to those who need Him most, getting His hands dirty to wash our sins away. Indeed, His hands will be dirty of His own innocent blood which He poured out for us and for our salvation.

Jesus quotes the prophet Hosea in the words "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" but also, Jesus brings out the whole meaning of Leviticus in a practical sense: Worship to God must come from the heart, with love towards God and a spirit of mercy, forgiveness and understanding towards our fellow humans. Earlier in the gospel, Jesus taught us to pray "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us". Matthew is showing more worship to God with his enthusiasm towards Jesus, than the Pharisees can show by correct procedures and passionless applications of the law. Matthew, just like many of us, knows how much God has forgiven him. For this reason,

he rejoices and displays his joy in sharing his faith and new way of life with all those he knows. Matthew, a forgiven and forgiving sinner, just like us.

Today, I hope and pray that you can hear the voice of Jesus calling you. If you hear His voice, do not turn away from Him, do not remain at the tax booth because of your sense of duty. Duty will not save your soul, but faith in Jesus will.

Amen

**Hymn:** Please click [here](#) for a link to the hymn “Are you washed in the blood?”, sung by “The Celebration Chorus”

**Prayer of Intercession:**

Dear God, creator and preserver of all, we pray for people of all sorts and conditions. Make your purpose known on earth, your saving power among the nations. We pray for the well-being of the catholic Church. So, guide and guard it by your good Spirit that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in the unity of the Spirit and in righteousness of life. We commend to your generous goodness all those who are in any way afflicted or distressed, in mind, body or circumstances. Comfort and relieve them according to their individual needs; give them patience under their suffering and a happy release out of all their afflictions, according to your will. All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Amen

**The Lord's prayer**

At the Saviour's command and formed by His divine teaching we pray together:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen**

**Benediction:**

The blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you always. Amen

Rev. Bruno Boldrini