

St. Matthias

Today the Church celebrates St. Matthias who was chosen to **replace Judas**. The disciples are gathered in the upper room with 120 other disciples and two other men: Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias. They prayed and cast lots and Matthias is chosen to replace Judas.

First, the replacement of Judas was the first major decision by the Apostles. The Apostles will have to settle a squabble about circumcision at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. The key is that the Lord works through his Apostles (the Church!) to choose Matthias and make major decisions. Our Lord can work directly with a person (conversion of St. Paul) or indirectly (through the Church, your family, or those around you).

It was important to replace Judas given the symbolic importance of the number twelve for the Jewish people. For example, there were twelve tribes in Israel. If the new Israel was to come from the disciples of Jesus, a twelfth Apostle is needed. Matthias is the man!

Furthermore, Peter provided the criterion for choosing the Apostle. Like Andrew, James, John, and Peter, the new Apostle needed to be someone who was a **witness of Christ's life from the beginning**.

This potential disciple had to see the full gift of the Holy Spirit operative in the life of Christ. He had to hear Christ's voice teaching the multitudes, witness Christ's healings, and even see the dead being raised. One experiences Christ firsthand to share him with others.

While two men fit the criterion, the Holy Spirit knew which one had a heart for the Lord. The Apostles **cast lots**, which is something the Jewish people did to assign Levitical priests their duties in the Temple (1 Chron. 24:31). Hence, Luke may be hinting here that the Apostles are priests. What we may have is the foundation of the priesthood.

What can we learn from St. Matthias? First, he is a latecomer. Sometimes you may resent someone added to your group. Instead of being resentful, look at the gifts he or she brings and how God has chosen this person to strengthen your community or group.

Second, notice that after this moment, we never hear about Matthias again. According to Tradition, Matthias preached around Judea like the other Apostles, then Greece, then Ethiopia and then what is now the Soviet Republic of Georgia. He was martyred in Georgia where he was stoned and then beheaded. The tradition is that all the Apostles were martyred except John, the beloved disciple.

Most importantly, however, Matthias did the work of Christ. He was chosen by our Lord. Whether you have followed Christ your whole life or experienced an early or late conversion, remember that the Lord has work for you to do!

~St. Matthias, pray for us!