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## POINTS BULLETIN

For Liturgical Year A

### Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

#### Gospel

##### Matthew 9: 9-13

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

#### Commentary

##### *Christ the Lord*

Jesus Christ makes more "I" statements than any other of the world's great religious figures. Buddha pointed to the Four Noble Truths, Mohammad to the words he received from Allah, even Moses drew his people's attention to their covenant with God and the Ten Commandments, but Jesus Christ never tires of calling men to himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), "I am the vine" (John 15:5), "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and in this passage: "Follow me... I came to call sinners." Jesus Christ himself is the cornerstone (cf. Acts 4:11), the one foundation upon which the house of our salvation is built (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11). The religious buck stops with Christ.

##### *Christ the Teacher*

We do not know the background to this dramatic encounter between St Matthew and Jesus Christ. Perhaps Matthew had been following Christ at a distance for some time, perhaps they had known each other for years and only now did Christ call him to closer discipleship, perhaps they had never met before and Christ simply knew at first sight that this man was meant to be one of the Twelve. We do know, however, that the innocuous phrase "and he got up and followed him" implies a full-scale revolution in Matthew's life. Leaving behind his lucrative and secure (albeit unpopular) position of collecting taxes for Palestine's foreign oppressors required taking a risk, to say the least; it required putting more faith in an itinerant carpenter from Galilee than in money, power, and all the pleasures they can offer. Why did Matthew do it, what gave him the courage to forsake the wide and smooth road of the world for the narrow and steep way of Christ?

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Christ tells us – he wants us to know so that we can do the same: Matthew recognized and admitted his need for God. “Those who are well do not need a physician... I came to call sinners...” In Christ, God “never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #30), but only those who admit their need can hear his voice. The Pharisees rejected Christ, because they did not believe they needed him. Matthew followed him, because Matthew knew that something was missing from his life, and the look of love and power that he saw in Christ’s eyes as he sat tallying coins in the market square gave him hope that in Christ he would find it.

### ***Christ the Friend***

When Christ calls someone to follow him, it is a dramatic event, a real encounter, face to face, eye to eye, heart to heart. Christianity is no abstract philosophy or aloof ideology, but a drama, a “covenant drama”, as the Church calls it (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2567), which addresses every man and woman in the core of their existence as a living, thinking, searching human being. Christianity is communion with God through friendship with Christ – nothing more, but nothing less.

### **Questions for Reflection**

1. Do I really believe that Christ is calling out to me personally, that “at every time and in every place” God is drawing close to me, inviting me “to seek him, to know him, to love him with all [my] strength”? (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1) If not, why not, is some other voice dominating my attention? If so, have I responded to the call with courage and generosity, as St Matthew did?
2. Is my religious life more similar to the Pharisees, who were occupied with external propriety and appearances, or to “the sinners and tax collectors,” who recognized their need for God and were therefore able to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
3. If Christ appeared to me right now as he did to St Matthew, and asked me to leave everything and follow him unconditionally, would I be able to do so? What would be hardest for me to give up: a relationship, a plan or dream, a pleasure, my comfort and security? May he be calling me to do just that?

*Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church #s 1996-2005 on Grace and our need for God, 27-49 on our innate need for God.*

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