

Minor Festivals: St. Matthias, Apostle, February 24

Jesus ascended into heaven forty days after he declared victory over the power of sin, Satan, and the sepulcher through his mighty and majestic resurrection from the dead. Before visibly leaving this earth, he said, "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." His apostles were to take the lead in the sacred task of spreading the Good News of forgiveness for all through Christ's death on the cross.

But there was a problem. There was a vacancy in the ranks of the apostles because one of them—the unbelieving traitor Judas Iscariot—had hanged himself and was delivered over to eternal destruction. Peter took the lead in addressing the situation: "Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection." So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:21-26)

There was one vacancy. They presented two qualified, eligible, and available candidates. They prayed for the Holy Spirit's guidance to pick the candidate that he wanted. They cast lots and the Holy Spirit issued a Divine Call to Matthias to fill the apostolic vacancy left by Judas. This event is celebrated on February 24—the Festival of St. Matthias the Apostle.

The Church continues to have a need to fill vacancies in the Public Ministry of the Gospel. Pastors and teachers retire. Pastors and teachers die. Sadly, pastors and teachers are sometimes asked to resign because they have disqualified themselves from the Public Ministry because of false doctrine or conduct not befitting the ministry. When vacancies arise, how are they filled? With the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. The Lord doesn't prescribe the process we are to use when issuing a Divine Call into the Public Teaching or Preaching Ministry. We could cast lots; we could draw names out of a hat; or we could ask our District President to simply assign somebody to fill our vacancies. Although God doesn't prescribe the process of issuing a Divine Call, he does assure us that when a Public Minister of the Gospel and a congregation are joined together, it is God the Holy Spirit who forms this partnership.

The Divine Call process we have agreed upon is carried out through our District President. He presents the congregation with a list of qualified, eligible, and available candidates to fill a vacancy. After prayerful consideration, the congregation votes and the person with a simple majority is chosen. The vote is then made unanimous, and we inform the person of the Call. That person prayerfully deliberates the Call and either accepts or returns it.

If the congregation desires, we can also go to the Assignment Committee and ask them in May to assign one of the graduates from Martin Luther College or Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary to serve our congregation. Whether they are called through the Voters Assembly or the Assignment Committee, we know that it is God the Holy Spirit who brings congregations and Public Ministers of the Gospel together. May we receive our called workers as gifts from God who faithfully feed Jesus' lambs and sheep here at St. Peter's. May we show all of our called workers the love and respect that is due them since they faithfully serve us as they represent our Lord before the congregation and the community.

Dear Lord, to your true servants give The grace to you alone to live. Set free from sin to serve you, Lord,
They go to share your living Word, The gospel message to proclaim That all may know your saving name.

When all their labor seems in vain, Revive their sinking hopes again; And when success crowns what they do,
Oh, keep them humble, Lord, and true Until before your judgment seat They lay their trophies at your feet.

After sharing this devotion with your family, take the time to read 1 Timothy 3.

Pastor Zuberbier