



St Matthew was born at Capernaum in Galilee. He was a tax collector. As a tax collector he would have been literate in Aramaic and Greek. He wrote his gospel in the Hebrew language, and tradition has it that he preached the faith in the East.

First Reading: (Eph 4:1-7, 11-13) I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all. But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the

stature of the fulness of Christ.

Ps 18:2-5

R./ Their span extends through all the earth.

Gospel: (Mt 9:9-13) As Jesus passed, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

Reflection: We are called to learn the art of following, as Mathew does in today's Gospel. Jesus calls Mathew and immediately he follows. Mathew, being so overjoyed, invites Jesus to his house and eats with the other tax collectors, (obviously Mathew's friends) considered as sinners. Mathew's former sinful life only increased his need to be a disciple. The tax collectors were unpopular people, as they exploited people and overcharged them. But they had the protection of the hated Roman Empire. However, Jesus realized that they are the ones who need to be saved, so he takes the first step of moving in the company of tax collectors and sinners. Additionally he said, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice". That meant the kind of 'empty' sacrifice they offered (as a ritual) was of no value without a heart that understood God's mercy and reflected that mercy towards others. Jesus breaks the norms and customs which excluded and divided persons. **The call of Mathew comes right in the ordinary happenings of his life** as in the case of David, Gideon, Samson and many others in the Scripture. **May we be alert to the many ways Jesus seeks entry into our lives in the ordinariness of our lives.** Like Jesus let us also welcome those 'shunned by society' or considered as 'sinners'.