



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."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, I come to you in this meditation ready to do whatever it is you ask. Left to myself I often take the easy and convenient path, yet I know the way of a Christian is through the narrow gate. In you I find the reason to abandon the easy path for a more perfect mission of love. I'm ready to learn the meaning of your command: "Follow me."

Petition: Lord, grant me the grace of a humble and contrite heart.

1. "Why Does Your Teacher Eat with Tax Collectors and Sinners?" The Pharisees want to keep their status secure. In their eyes, religion is not a quest for truth, but a way to tranquilize their conscience under the guise of a law which makes few demands on them. They are unwilling to break away from the "baby food" that is the old law and chew on the "steak" of real holiness. It is easy to return back to "baby food" and to remember the times when God was asking less, in order to keep a false sense of peace. Such a manner is never enough, though, for an honest man of God, who learns every day to face the brutal facts of who he really is before God - that God expects much from him, and that the Lord's grace will empower him to deliver. I must seek out the areas of routine where I have justified myself in giving less than what Christ is really asking.

2. "I Did Not Come to Call the Righteous but Sinners." How does God pick which souls to approach with his consoling presence? "Through the abundance of your mercy, O God our Savior, you appeared to sinners and tax collectors. Where

else was your light to shine if not upon those who were sitting in darkness? Glory be to you!" (Irenaeus, *Anthologion*, 1:1390). Christ is attracted to those to whom his grace will mean something, those in whom there is fertile ground for a response to his invitation to holiness. No abundance of religious achievement or spiritual knowledge will catch his attention, but put in front of him a contrite soul ready to abandon himself to his grace, and there he is.

3. "Those Who Are Well Do Not Need a Physician, But the Sick Do." A posture of humility helps us to never take God's mercy for granted. One day Brother Elias found St. Francis crying over how terrible a sinner he was. Surprised, Br. Elias asked how he could think such a thing. Francis therein recalled all the graces he had received, and reflected that if any other man had received them they would have been a far greater man than he (Crowley, *A Day With the Lord*, p.146). Such are the saints - never satisfied with themselves, always in need of God and his mercy. All that Christ needs to make me a saint is that I have a heart ready to change and be ready to base myself on his grace and less on my formulas for success.

Conversation with Christ: Lord, I ask you to receive me in all my weakness, so that I may more confidently base my future growth on your grace and mercy. Let me enter heaven, as St. Theresa of the Child Jesus wished, "with my hands empty." All glory and victory is yours alone. Thank you for choosing me, out of love for me.

Resolution: I will set a time and place for confession this week, that I may honor God's mercy and show with my fervor what it means for me to be his chosen one.