Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“I did not come to call the righteous but sinners” (Matthew 9:13).

Eph 4:1-7, 11-19; Matt 9:9-13

St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

Today’s commemoration of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist, probably celebrates two different individuals. Matthew, the tax collector and Apostle, may have been the source for a collection of Aramaic sayings by Jesus, but most scholars think the Gospel of Matthew, composed in Greek a generation later for a Jewish Christian community in Syria, was written by another person called Matthew the Evangelist.

This historical fact reminds us that the formation of the Gospels was a long, multilayered process over time involving many sources, both oral and written, and many contributors as preachers and listeners who realized how Jesus had fulfilled the prophets already prominent in the Scriptures. Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, assembled this material for their faith communities to proclaim the faith we share today. They were brilliant, inspired authors who created works designed to engage believers to grow in their faith formation as they adapted and applied the stories and words of Jesus to their own lives and changing circumstances.

The Scriptures are living voices and not just documents. We might say that by sharing the daily readings we continue this process of invoking the presence of Jesus in our own lives and communities. We are part of a living extension of the unfolding revelation of God’s message to today’s world.

One example of this expansive process is how Pope Francis describes his own conversion experience with a quote from a commentary on Matthew and a painting by the Italian artist Caravaggio. The pope explained how the Latin motto on his coat of arms, *Miserando atque eligendo,* (“Having mercied me, he chose me”) captures his own call by divine mercy as a young man. He was suddenly drawn to go to confession, and in that moment made the decision to enter the priesthood.

In Caravaggio’s painting, “The Call of Matthew,” one of the pope’s favorites, Matthew sits in a tavern when Jesus comes in and points to him, overwhelming him with mercy. When he was elected pope, Francis made Divine Mercy the central theme of his service to the universal church, a decision that shared his own conversion with us and proclaimed the importance of mercy. In this way, a Gospel story sent a wave of influence in motion that reached the whole world.

The same potential for inspiration touches each of us when we open our hearts to the Word. It sets in motion graces that often go beyond us into the lives of others. The Gospel is preached when we share its influence by our words and example. The power of the Scriptures leaves the printed page and spoken word and goes into action. Even if our influence is small, even undetected, it is always part of the greater mystery of grace at work in the world. In this way, by reading the daily Word we all become both apostles and evangelists.

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