**TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 22 – XXV WEEK O.T.**

**SAINT MATTHEW THE APOSTLE**

**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.**

**Jesus is the free man. He is free from any malformation in which the purity of faith itself often falls; from every distortions of every human religiosity, from every thought of men; from each of their constraints, fruit of atavistic traditions or historical complexities. He is free from everything that is not most pure expression of the will of his Father who is in heaven and whom He knows in the most absolute fullness of truth and holiness. Jesus passes on from the roads of earth. He sees a man, seated at the tax collector’s table and calls him: “Follow me.” This man, without thinking twice, stands up and follows him. It is not the answer of this man that should make us reflect. Everyone can answer the call of Jesus. Instead, it is the call of Jesus that must lead us to a sound meditation, so that we always live his same freedom as well. The called is a tax collector. An enemy of the people of God and thus considered by the Pharisees an enemy of God, a publican, namely a public sinner.**

**What man judges, condemns, despises, excludes from the community of the children of Israel, Jesus calls him to make a pillar of the New People of God, one of his apostles, a missionary of his kingdom. The light of the holiness and of the truth of Christ Jesus sees every man beyond their historical condition of falsity and truth, of justice and injustice, of friend or enemy of the people of God and, therefore, of God himself. The light of Christ Jesus always sees man in his openness to the transcendence of God. He sees him in an answer that can always be given to the Lord. He sees him always capable of salvation, redemption, of holiness. The darkness of the sin of man, instead, sees man in his current state, in his historical condition, but not as it is lived by the heart of the one who lives it, rather by them circumscribed, defined and declared immutable. Immutably holy. Immutably sinner. The darkness of the sin always make ourselves be seen in a holiness already acquired forever, while the other in a sin already acquired forever. We always saint, even if we sin. The others always sinners, even if they convert themselves. This is the falsity where sin gets to when it roots in a heart. The Lord had already operated to eradicate these false thoughts by hearts, but with few successes, few fruits.**

**The just can become an unjust. The unjust can always convert himself. This is the truth of God. Jesus goes far beyond this sublime truth. The will of the Father is that every man can become missionary of his kingdom and this no matter its historical condition. The historical condition does not count in the choices of God. God chooses according to wisdom and divine intelligence. To us, it is denied to cast a glance in this eternal wisdom. One must always trust God. His choices are inscrutable. His choice always requires our perfect compliance in justice, in truth, in holiness. The choice always involves the abandonment of what one is in order to become what one is called to be.**

**Let us read the text of Mt 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."**

**The call of Levi to follow Jesus is as if it had torn down a wall, a huge dam, very long and very wide. It is as if it had destroyed an impassable fence. If Jesus opens the gates of the kingdom to tax collectors and sinners – who are like the boundless water of oceans, of rivers and of heaven, not fallen down the earth yet – it is really the end of our “purity”. This is the thought of Pharisees and scribes. These ones are not concerned about these tax collectors and sinners who eat with Jesus. Even if their number is a multitude, they are always few. It is as if one had drawn only a jar from the immensity of the water. They are concerned about the fact that Jesus declares drawing this water possible. One can draw it not for a part, but in its totality. Rather, He has precisely come to make all this water excluded from the kingdom become essential part of the same kingdom, building of the kingdom, edifying of it.**

**Only in this term, can one understand the objection of the Pharisees to the disciples of Jesus: “Why, while we lock the gates of the kingdom to tax collectors and sinners, do you open them?” They see their lake invaded and that is why they tremble. Their false kingdom is about to end. It is about to be overwhelmed. The freedom of Christ Jesus is far beyond these narrow bounds of their small, small, small lake. The freedom of Christ Jesus is so great to welcome the entire world in his kingdom. Jesus always answers with that shining and most limpid light blinding of truth just because it is uttered and oriented on the face of his listeners. The physician is surely for the sick, not for those who are well. These do not need the physician. The sick, yes, they need him, instead. You pretend to be physicians, while you are not actually. If you were physicians, you would surely have at heart the destiny of the sick, you are not physician. Simply, you are not for the others. You are only for yourselves. Put before this shining light of truth, everyone knows who he really is: physician, not physician, for himself, for the others. He simply knows if he is, or he is not.**

**A truth must be immediately highlight: Jesus gives full fulfilment to the prophecy of Hosea, the prophet of the spousal love of God in favour of his people: “Your piety is like a morning cloud, like the dew that early passes away. For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than holocausts.” (cf. Hs 6, 1-11) In what sense does Jesus bring the entire prophecy to fulfilment? In Hosea, God asks each son of his people to concern about one only thing: to practise the justice toward men, that is at the foundation of his Covenant. The foundation of the covenant is not the sacrifice, it is not the holocausts, but the love toward the neighbour according to the Word of the Law the Lord gave them so that it was integrally observed. The sacrifice and the holocaust have one only meaning: bringing man into the heart of the Law that is exactly love. If one enters the heart of the Law living in fullness of love, this one does not need neither “sacrifices” nor holocausts. As sacrifice, one means the killing of an animal before the Lord or as sacrifice of communion, or as sacrifice of expiation, or even as holocaust.**

**This is overcoming of Jesus and this is his absolute news: the love God wants us to give every man must be his same love, his same compassion, his same mercy. Where does this love start: from opening every man the gates of the kingdom. This is the will of God and, to this divine will, we must offer the sacrifice of our heart, of our mind, of our same religiosity. Of all these things: mind, heart, religiosity, must we make a sacrifice, a holocaust, a total consummation for our God. How can one make a sacrifice to the Lord? Letting ourselves be driven by the bright example of the love of Christ the Lord who opens the gates of the kingdom to every man. Whoever had to lock – with no reason - the gates of the kingdom to one only person, this one does not surely love, even if every day he offers the Lord a myriad of sacrifice and holocaust. The one who cures the sick, helps them to heal, makes them testimonies and missionaries of the kingdom of God on our earth is the one who loves. The dam is torn down. Whoever had to close it might never say to love. May the Mother of Jesus obtain for us every wisdom in the Holy Spirit.**