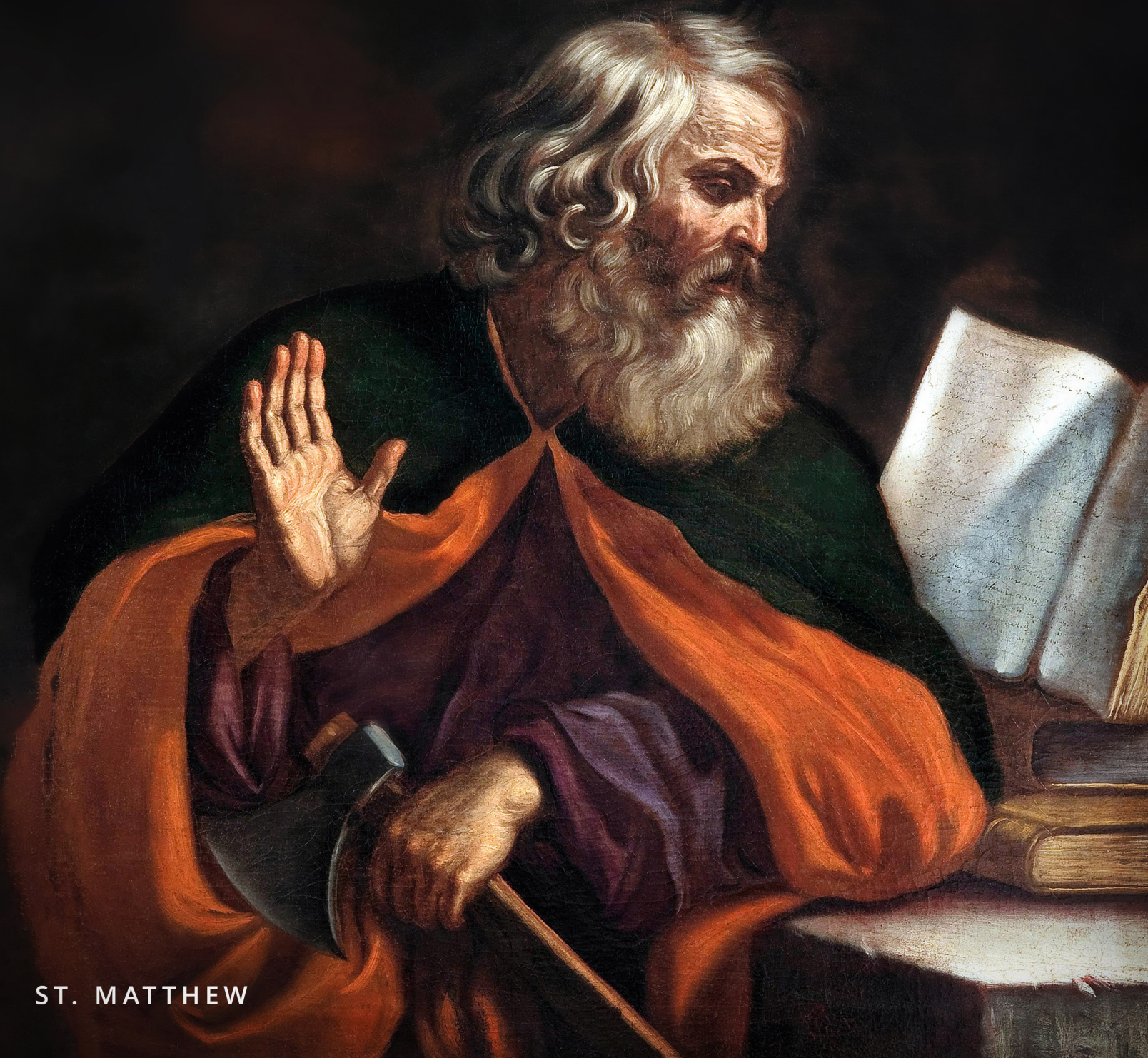




EWTN

Global Catholic
Network

CHRIST CAME TO CALL SINNERS



ST. MATTHEW

CHRIST CAME TO CALL SINNERS



EWTN

Global
Catholic
Network

Copyright 2023 by EWTN Publishing, Inc.
5817 Old Leeds Road, Irondale, Alabama 35210 USA
Tel.: 1.800.447.3986 | www.ewtn.com

Cover art: *St. Matthew the Apostle* by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri

Scripture taken from the Catholic Edition of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible,
copyright © 1965, 1966,
National Council of the Churches of Christ
in the United States of America.
Used by permission.
All rights reserved worldwide.



EWTN

Global
Catholic
Network

ewtn.com

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Reflecting on St. Matthew	Page 4
Christ Came to Call Sinners	Page 5
We're Not Defined by Our Sin	Page 6
There Is Hope	Page 8

Introduction

“It is God who always calls us, who always looks for us,
who always takes care of each one of us personally.”

– St. Augustine of Hippo

One of the fundamental pillars of Christ’s teaching is that He “came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matthew 9:13).

We are introduced to this truth when St. Matthew encounters Our Lord for the first time and He invites Matthew to follow Him. Christ shares it at that moment because Matthew was a tax collector, a group whom the Pharisees judged to be “sinners,” and who were generally disliked for collecting taxes for the Romans.

When Jesus called Matthew, He taught both His hearers and us that He came not to judge, but to call all who were estranged from God.

This message brings hope to every generation, therefore. In this eBook, we will reflect on St. Matthew and his encounter with Christ and on this fundamental teaching of Our Lord. In doing so, we find hope in the example of holy men and women who have gone before us and who demonstrated that no sin is too great for God’s mercy! God calls even the greatest of sinners to become great saints.

Reflecting on St. Matthew

“As Jesus passed on from there, 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.**” – Matthew 9:9–13 (emphasis added)

The previous passage recounts the moment when Christ first encountered St. Matthew and asked him to follow Him.

Some important things to note about this moment were that Matthew, at the time, was a tax collector. Tax collectors were commonly hated by those in their own communities because they worked for the Romans and often collected more taxes than were due as profit for themselves. Matthew was not someone, therefore, one would expect to be called by Our Lord. Then again, not many of the Apostles were.

Though Matthew wasn’t the typical “honest and just man,” he surprisingly answered Christ immediately, nonetheless. Jesus saw him and said, “Follow me.” And Matthew did not hesitate in obeying Him (Matthew 9:9).

Being a tax collector, Matthew was relatively wealthy. He had a stable life. His money didn’t come from an honest place, but he lived comfortably. When he encountered Christ, he was transformed. He dramatically left everything behind to follow the Lord.

From Matthew, we learn humility, detachment from worldly things, and to swiftly answer Christ when He calls.

Christ Came to Call Sinners

To most people of his day, Matthew would have been considered a “sinner.” Tax collectors were thought to be unjust according to the Law of Moses, thus His hearers were taken aback when Jesus, whom some thought a holy man, sat at table with one.

The Pharisees said to the Apostles, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” (Matthew 9:11). This is when Christ shares one of the foundations of His teachings: that He “came not to call the righteous, but sinners” (Matthew 9:13).

This comment must have been appalling to the Pharisees, who preached a righteousness that included not only Moses but their own oral tradition. Yet, it must have seemed hopeful for the Apostles, who were just learning from their Teacher that He came to call even the worst among us!

Our Lord reiterates this teaching in the parable of the lost sheep (Matthew 18:10–14):

“What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

Here is truly something upon which to pause and reflect:

Christ came to call the person who may be lost, the person who deliberately chooses sin, the person who is confused, is longing for love, or is stuck in their vices.

Christ loves us. He knows our sin, but He doesn’t condemn us. He looks at each person and sees His Father’s son or daughter, His own brother or sister, each one of us in need of the Father’s mercy, and He invites us to follow Him to the infinite fount of mercy and life.

We're Not Defined By Our Sin

At times we may feel unworthy of God's love. At such times, be encouraged, instead, to remember this truth,

"You are made in the image and likeness of God."

Christ came to call sinners and He knows our sin, but He doesn't call us by our sin. God calls us by name. We learn this truth from the prophet Isaiah (43:1):

"But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
'Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.'"

Our worth comes from the fact that we are known, loved, and desired by the Creator of the universe, the King of Heaven and Earth. He who stamped His image in us desires to restore us to His perfect likeness, even after we have disfigured it by sin.

Thus, we are not defined as persons by our past decisions, our bad actions, our sins. Christ loves us, cares for us, and desires us, even when we turn from Him. When we encounter Christ, He invites us to leave our past ways behind, forgives us of everything we've done, and invites us into the light of His grace. In God the Father's perfect love we find the freedom to return to Him and to remain in His love which is so good.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end."
(Lamentations 3:22).

In His mercy, we are made new, we are:

- Precious and honored in [His] sight (Isaiah 43:4).
- Created for [His] glory (Isaiah 43:7).
- Redeemed (Isaiah 43:1).
- Created for good works (Ephesians 2).
- No longer a slave, but a son (Galatians 4).

(continued)

CHRIST CAME TO CALL SINNERS

- Not alone, [He] is with you (Isaiah 41:10).
- Loved by Him (Isaiah 43:4).
- A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation . . . that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

© 2014 EWTN. All rights reserved.

There Is Hope

The evidence that there is hope is the example of the countless men and women who have gone before us and who have shown us that no sin is ever too great for God's powerful love and mercy. Following are some examples of those who have gone from great sinners to great saints.

St. Matthew the Apostle

- He was a Jew who worked for the Roman government as a tax collector (tax collectors were despised by the people in their community and were viewed as traitors).
- Matthew met Jesus, who invited him to become His disciple; Matthew immediately responded to Christ's call. "As Jesus passed on from there he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he rose and followed him" (Matthew 9:9).
- He left behind his comfortable life as a tax collector, his status, and his reputation to follow Christ.
- He became one of the Twelve Apostles and eventually one of the four Gospel writers.

Words of Wisdom from St. Matthew

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven. ... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." – Matthew 6:19–21

"With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." – Matthew 19:26

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." – Matthew 6:24

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many." – Matthew 7:13

(continued)

CHRIST CAME TO CALL SINNERS

From Matthew, we learn two important things: to swiftly and trustingly respond to Christ when He calls us, and that Jesus does not exclude anyone from His friendship. We are not to think we are too far from God's grace to be His friend. When He calls, answer. He has chosen you.

© 2014 EWTN



EWTN

Global
Catholic
Network

ewtn.com

CHRIST CAME TO CALL SINNERS

St. Augustine of Hippo

- His father was a pagan, and his mother was a Christian who raised Augustine in the faith, although he wasn't baptized until he was an adult.
- He participated in what St. Paul calls "youthful passions" (2 Timothy 2:22).
- Struggling with letting go of his sinful ways, before his complete conversion he prayed to the Lord: "Grant me chastity and continence ... but not yet."
- At the age of 19, he began an affair with a woman with whom he had a child out of wedlock named Adeodatus (Latin for, "Gift of God").
- Despite being raised Christian, Augustine abandoned his faith for Gnosticism.
- One day at his teaching job, he heard a childlike voice chanting "*Tolle, lege*" (Latin for, "Take, read"). Taking it as a divine command, he opened the Bible randomly to Romans 13:13-14. This passage inspired him and was the beginning of his genuine conversion.
- His conversion continued thanks to the fervent prayers of his mother St. Monica.
- After his mother and his son died, he became a priest of the diocese of Hippo, later becoming its bishop.
- As bishop, he wrote extensively, and the wisdom, theology, and philosophy shared in his writings, as well as his reputation for holiness, has led him to be considered a Church Father, one of the four Great Fathers.

From the example of the radical conversion of St. Augustine, as with the Apostle Matthew, we learn that when we respond to God's call He can do incredible things in our lives.

Words of Wisdom from St. Augustine of Hippo

"The times of conversion are the times of God."

"It is God who always calls us, who always looks for us, who always takes care of each one of us personally."

"To call out to God also means being ready to listen and to receive what He gives to us. God is never wrong."

CHRIST CAME TO CALL SINNERS

St. Paul the Apostle

- He was born into a well-to-do Jewish family.
- He came under the liberalizing Hellenic influences in his hometown of Tarsus.
- He was a self-righteous Pharisee, who became fanatically anti-Christian.
- He was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a fervent enemy of Christ.
- He met Christ when he was on his way to Damascus to arrest all Jews who believed in Him.
- When Paul encountered Christ, He said to him, "Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?" (Acts 22:7).
- Saul experienced a dramatic and immediate conversion the moment he met Christ.
- He went on to be baptized and to expend himself in bringing others to Christ, being martyred in Rome.
- Recognized by the Church as one of the Apostles, his letters and teaching contribute to Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition.

Words of Wisdom on St. Paul

"What shall I do, Lord?" (Acts 22:10)

"Thus St. Paul was not transformed by a thought but by an event, by the irresistible presence of the Risen One whom subsequently he would never be able to doubt, so powerful had been the evidence of the event, of this encounter. It radically changed Paul's life in a fundamental way; in this sense one can and must speak of a conversion."
– Pope Benedict XVI

"In this sense it was not simply a conversion, a development of his 'ego,' but rather a death and a resurrection for Paul himself. One existence died and another, new one was born with the Risen Christ."
– Pope Benedict XVI

CHRIST CAME TO CALL SINNERS

St. Olga of Kyiv

St. Olga is recognized by both East and West as an important figure in the evangelization of the Slavic nations, especially Ukraine and Russia.

- She was from Russia; born to Viking parents.
- When she was around 20 years old, her husband, Prince Igor of Kyiv, was captured and cruelly murdered, leaving her widowed and alone to raise their three-year-old son.
- She tricked the group of people who killed her husband (Drevlians) to return to her because she said she wanted to honor them. When they returned, she had them fall into a trench where they were buried alive.
- She tricked a second group to return to her and had them burned in a building fire.
- She tricked hundreds more, a third and fourth time, into believing that she wanted to make peace with them, when she was still seeking revenge for her husband's death.
- Eventually, she was baptized in Constantinople by the Byzantine Emperor, Constantine VII, and converted to Christianity in the 950's.
- She tried to convert her son, but failed, though he did promise to not persecute Christians in his kingdom.
- Though she was unsuccessful in bringing Christianity to Ukraine, her grandson Vladimir did embrace the faith and eventually introduced Christianity to the land of the Rus.
- Today she is venerated, along with St. Michael the Archangel, as patrons of Kyiv.

Some people are born into Christian families and fall away from the faith. Some live very far from God and are changed completely when He calls. From the examples of the lives of these men and women, we learn that we are never too lost for the Good Shepherd to find us and call us back to Him. This should give us hope and cause us to persevere along the path of conversion as they did.

About Us

Founded more than 40 years ago by a Poor Clare Nun of Perpetual Adoration, Mother Mary Angelica of the Annunciation, PCPA, EWTN is the largest religious media network in the world. EWTN's 11 global TV channels are broadcast in multiple languages 24 hours a day, seven days a week to over 400 million television households in more than 160 countries and territories. EWTN platforms also include radio services transmitted through SIRIUS/XM, iHeart Radio, and over 600 domestic and international AM & FM radio affiliates; a worldwide shortwave radio service; one of the largest Catholic websites in the U.S. and second only to the Vatican worldwide; electronic and print news services, including Catholic News Agency, *National Catholic Register* newspaper, and several global news wire services; as well as EWTN Publishing, its book publishing division.

Learn More about EWTN

[EWTN](#)

[Seasons and Feasts](#)

[Television Programs](#)

[Radio Programs](#)

[For a one-time gift or to become a monthly donor](#)