

## **Homily – Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist Archdiocesan Pastoral Council – September 21, 2024**

As we gather today on the Feast of Saint Matthew, we are reminded of our shared calling as disciples of Christ. This celebration – during the jubilee for the 150th anniversary of the canonical erection of our diocese – represents an opportunity to reflect on our mission to evangelize and to pray for renewed apostolic zeal, especially as members of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council, charged with guiding and inspiring our parishes.

In the Gospel, we encounter Matthew, a tax collector, an outcast by societal and religious standards. Yet, Jesus calls him with mercy, seeing beyond his flaws and failings. Saint Bede the Venerable beautifully reflects on this encounter. As a matter of fact, Pope Francis took his motto from the beginning of today's second reading in the Office of Readings, which is a homily by Saint Bede the Venerable for today's feast. Saint Bede reminds us that Christ does not merely call us to follow Him physically, but to imitate His life, walking as He walked. (Quote) *“Jesus saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him: Follow me. Jesus saw Matthew, not merely in the usual sense, but more significantly with his merciful understanding of men. He saw the tax collector and, because he saw him through the eyes of mercy and chose him, he said to him: Follow me.”* (end of quote). We know from experience that the Lord's merciful gaze is irresistible. Matthew's response was immediate – he rose and followed the Lord, leaving behind his worldly possessions. We see the transformative power of God's grace. Matthew, once a tax

collector, became an apostle, a teacher of nations, and an evangelist who would draw many sinners to Christ.

As we reflect on the 150-year legacy of our Archdiocese, we are reminded that the Church's mission has always been to evangelize. Saint Paul, in his letter to the Ephesians, speaks of the unity of the Church, grounded in one Lord, one faith, and one baptism. This unity, however, is not uniformity but a beautiful diversity of charisms and gifts, each given for the building up of the Body of Christ. Every believer, lay and ordained, is called to serve, to give, and to share the Good News of Christ's love.

We must encourage our parish councils and the faithful to rediscover this calling to evangelize. Like Matthew, we are called to leave behind anything that hinders our mission and to open our hearts to Christ's transformative love. Let us be agents of mercy, welcoming the marginalized, the forgotten, and the sinner, just as Christ welcomed Matthew.

May Our Lady of Guadalupe help us to answer the call – like Matthew – with courage, drawing many to Christ, and may the Archdiocese of San Antonio continue to be a beacon of hope and faith for generations to come.