



Introduction: When One Falls, God Calls Another

In the history of the early Church, there is a name that, although barely mentioned in the pages of the New Testament, resonates with enormous symbolic and theological strength: **Matthias**, the twelfth apostle. Often overshadowed by Peter, John, Paul, or even Judas Iscariot, Matthias represents a figure of faithfulness, restoration, and divine election that still speaks to us today, in a time when we too are called to restore what has been wounded or betrayed.

This article seeks to rescue his memory, his providential election, his role in apostolic continuity, and how his life challenges us today, in the midst of a Church that struggles to remain faithful in a world in crisis. If you've ever felt that you occupy a "secondary" place, that your work in God's Kingdom is invisible, or that you arrived "after" others more renowned, **Matthias is your model**. And even more: he is an invitation to understand how the Holy Spirit acts when everything seems broken.

1. Who Was Matthias? The Man Before the Apostle

The name **Matthias** comes from the Hebrew *Mattityah*, which means "gift of God." This is no minor detail: his identity is already steeped in a profound theological truth. Before being chosen as an apostle, Matthias was one of Jesus' **constant disciples**, someone who had followed Him from the **baptism in the Jordan to the Ascension** (Acts 1:21-22).

Though the Gospels do not mention him explicitly, his closeness to the group of the Twelve and his perseverance made him a qualified witness to take Judas' place. He wasn't a newcomer or an improviser. He was a disciple proven in silent fidelity.

2. The Context: The Wound Left by Judas

After the betrayal and suicide of **Judas Iscariot**, the apostolic college was left incomplete. This was not just a moral and spiritual tragedy but also an **ecclesial wound**. The number twelve was not arbitrary: it represented the **twelve tribes of Israel**, a sign of the new humanity restored in Christ.



Peter, aware of this, takes the initiative to restore that symbolic number. In **Acts 1:15-26**, we read how the community prays, reflects on Scripture, and finally casts lots between two candidates: **Joseph Barsabbas, called Justus**, and **Matthias**. The lot — a legitimate instrument in that context to discern God's will — fell on Matthias, "and he was counted with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:26).

This was not a democratic election nor a mere human choice. The community prayed and trusted that **God would choose**. An apostle is not made by merit, but by **divine calling and mission**. Matthias was therefore God's chosen one to **heal an internal fracture**.

3. Apostolic Succession: A Lesson for Today's Church

Matthias is the **first apostle chosen after the Ascension**, and his election marks a theological milestone: the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, **has the authority to continue Christ's work**. This act legitimizes **apostolic succession**, the transmission of the apostles' ministry and teaching through the bishops.

In a time when authority is questioned, when many abandon the faith due to scandals or disappointments, **Matthias reminds us that the Church is still guided by God**, even in her darkest moments. When one betrays, God raises another faithful one. Christ's mission does not stop because of human unfaithfulness.

4. What Happened to Matthias Afterward? Tradition, Martyrdom, and Mission

After his election, the Acts of the Apostles do not mention Matthias again. However, the **Tradition** of the Church has preserved several references to his apostolic work:

- He is said to have **preached in Judea** first and later went to **the Caspian Sea region and Ethiopia**.
- Many sources state that he was **martyred**, either by stoning, crucifixion, or beheading.
- His relics, according to some traditions, were taken to Rome or to Trier (Germany).

What is certain is that **he died bearing witness to Christ**, thus fulfilling the vocation for



which he had been chosen: to be a **witness of the Resurrection** (Acts 1:22).

5. Spiritual Relevance: What Matthias Teaches Today

The life and mission of Matthias are not just historical facts. They are a **living word for our generation**. Here are some practical applications for our Christian lives:

a) God Sees Those the World Forgets

Matthias was not part of Jesus' inner circle, performed no famous miracles or sermons, yet **God chose him**. This consoles all those who serve in hidden ways, in small roles, in silence. Heaven doesn't measure like the world does. In the Church, **faithfulness matters more than fame**.

b) One Person's Sin Doesn't Stop God's Plan

Judas was a scandal within the apostolic group, a traitor among Christ's closest friends. But his fall didn't paralyze the mission. On the contrary, it gave way to even stronger restoration. This encourages us to move forward when we experience disappointments or betrayals within the Church.

c) Prayer Precedes Every True Election

The disciples didn't choose Matthias based on personal preferences or strategies. They retreated to pray. Today more than ever, we need communities that **discern from prayer** and not from human calculations. The Holy Spirit has not stopped speaking; what's missing are those who listen.

d) We Are All Called to Be "Number Twelve" for Someone

Spiritually speaking, you can be someone's Matthias — in your family, parish, or community. Where there's an absence, betrayal, or wound, **God may be calling you to restore and fill that void with your faithfulness**.



6. Liturgical Celebration and Devotion

The **feast of Saint Matthias the Apostle** is celebrated on **May 14** in the Roman calendar. In the traditional rite (Tridentine Calendar), his feast was on **February 24**, showing that his veneration is very ancient.

He is often invoked as the **patron of carpenters, civil engineers, and recovering alcoholics**, though his deepest patronage is over those who **step into difficult roles after a crisis**.

Conclusion: The Apostle of Restoration

Saint Matthias is a discreet but powerfully symbolic figure. He represents **God's response to human sin**, restoration after betrayal, and divine election that surpasses our categories. In a time when many institutions are shaken, when the Church suffers both from within and without, **Matthias reminds us that God does not give up on us**.

It doesn't matter if you arrived "later," if you're not in the spotlight, or if you were called to a difficult place: **God sees you, calls you, and wants to use you to heal what's broken**.

Saint Matthias the Apostle, pray for us. Teach us to respond with humility and faithfulness to God's call, even when no one else sees it.