

Tuesday of the Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 6:12-19): Jesus departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named Apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

And he came down with them and stood on a stretch of level ground. A great crowd of his disciples and a large number of the people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and even those who were tormented by unclean spirits were cured. Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all.

“Jesus departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God”

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Today, I would like to center our thoughts on the first words of this Gospel: “Jesus departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God” (Lk 6:12). Introductions as this one may go unnoticed in our daily reading of the Gospel, while—in fact—they are of the maximum importance. Today, Jesus, specifically and clearly tells us that the election of the twelve disciples—central decision for our Church's future life—was preceded by a full night in prayer alone, before God, his Father.

How was the Lord's prayer? What we can deduce from his life, it must have been a

prayer full of confidence in the Father, of complete surrendering to His will —“because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me” (Jn 5:30)—, of clear union with God's work of salvation. Only through this profound, long and constant prayer —supported always by the action of the Holy Spirit that, at the moment of Jesus' Incarnation, had already fallen over Him in His Baptism— could the Lord receive the necessary strength and light to go on with His mission of abiding by the Father to accomplish His work of salvation for mankind. The subsequent election of the Apostles —that as St. Cyril of Alexandria says, “the same Christ affirms having given them the same mission He received from the Father”—, shows us how the rising Church was the fruit of Jesus' prayer to the Father in the Holy Spirit and, therefore, the work of the Holy Trinity. “When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named Apostles” (Lk 6:13).

If only all our life as Christians —of disciples of God— could always be immersed in prayer and led by it.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“Procure to be yourself the sacrifice and the priest of God. Do not slight what the power of God has given and granted you. Dress yourself with the tunic of holiness, make of your heart an altar and in so doing united with God, present your body to the Lord as a sacrifice.” (Saint Peter Chrysologus)

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“And the best thing is that in the group of his followers, despite their differences, they all lived side by side, overcoming imaginable difficulties: indeed, what bound them together was Jesus himself, in whom they all found themselves united with one another.” (Benedict XVI)

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“When Christ instituted the Twelve, ‘he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them. Just as ‘by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another.’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n° 880)