Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Gospel text (*Lk* Lk 5:27-32): Jesus saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, “Follow me.” And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him (...). The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.”

The announcement of the Gospel consists in the offering of God’s grace to the sinner

EDITORIAL TEAM evangeli.net (based on texts by Benedict XVI)
(Città del Vaticano, Vatican)

Today Jesus welcomes into the group of His close friends a man who was regarded as a public sinner. Matthew, in fact, not only handled money deemed impure because of its provenance from people foreign to the People of God, but he also collaborated with an alien and despicably greedy authority, whose tributes, moreover, could be arbitrarily determined. This is why several times the Gospels link "tax collectors and sinners" as well as "tax collectors and prostitutes".

A first fact strikes one based on these references: Jesus does not exclude anyone from His friendship. Indeed, precisely while He is at table in the home of Matthew-Levi, in response to those who expressed shock at the fact that He associated with people who had so little to recommend, He made the important statement: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners".

—The good news of the Gospel consists precisely in this: offering God's grace to the sinner! Those who seem to be the farthest from holiness can even become a model of the acceptance of God's mercy...