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 focus our reflection on the opening words of this Gospel: "Jesus departed to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God" (Lk 6:12). Introductions like this can easily go unnoticed in our daily reading of the Gospel, yet they are of the utmost importance. Here we are told very clearly that the choice of the twelve apostles—a decision central to the future life of the Church—was preceded by an entire night of Jesus' prayer, alone, before God His Father.

What was the Lord's prayer like? From what we glimpse in His life, it must have been a prayer filled with absolute trust in the Father, with total abandonment to His will—"I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me" (Jn 5:30)—and with complete union to His saving work. Only from this profound, prolonged, and constant prayer—always sustained by the action of the Holy Spirit, present from the moment of the Incarnation and descending upon Him at His Baptism—only then, we might say, could the Lord draw the strength and the light necessary to carry forward His mission of obedience to the Father and accomplish His saving work for humanity.

The subsequent choice of the Apostles—who, as Saint Cyril of Alexandria reminds us, "Christ Himself declares that He has given them the same mission He received from the Father"—reveals to us that the

very birth of the Church was the fruit of this prayer of Jesus to the Father in the Spirit. It is, therefore, the work of the Most 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).

May our own Christian lives—our discipleship of Christ—always be rooted in prayer and continually nourished by it.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “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)

- “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)

- “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, nº 880)