

March Holy Hero

## St. Matthew the Apostle

Feast day: September 21



The first Gospel was written by St. Matthew; one of the twelve apostles of Jesus. Matthew, also known as Levi, was the son of Alphaeus, and a tax collector in the city of Capernaum. He was Jewish, but collected taxes for the Romans, who had conquered the Jews. This made him greatly disliked by his people, who wanted nothing to do with this "public sinner". Jesus felt otherwise. In his Gospel, Matthew writes of his call to be an Apostle of Jesus: "As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me'. And he rose and followed him." (Mt 9:9) Without looking back, Matthew left his work and his sinful life behind, and answered the call to be a follower of Jesus Christ. Matthew gave a banquet for Jesus and invited many of his friends who were tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees criticized Jesus for eating and talking with such people. Jesus said to them, "Those who are well do not need a doctor, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mk 2:17)

Jesus calls EVERYONE to be his friend. Sometimes the people who seem to be the farthest from holiness become the most wonderful examples of God's mercy toward sinners and how God's grace can turn one's life around. Matthew wrote his Gospel to convince the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Son of God and the awaited Messiah. According to tradition, Matthew preached the Gospel among the Jews in Palestine for some years with the other Apostles before spreading the Good News to other countries.