

“Necessary for You”

It’s an awkward time here in our text from Acts 1. It’s the time between the Ascension of Jesus, and Pentecost. Jesus has instructed His disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they are “clothed with power from on high.”

And so there they are – the Eleven, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers. The congregation of the brothers is about 120 – not all that different than the congregation that gathers here.

St. Peter stands up and proclaims God’s Word – telling the gathered assembly that the Scriptures had to be fulfilled – specifically, the Scriptures which foretold Judas’ betrayal of Jesus. It was necessary for Jesus to be handed over – to be crucified, put to death, and buried. This horrible betrayal by one of His own disciples was necessary – necessary for you and your salvation.

It may shock you to think that Jesus had called Judas in the first place – called him to be one of the Twelve disciples – or, as Peter says, “for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”

Jesus knew full well that Judas would betray Him – and yet, He called him, catechized him, served him – even gave His life for him. That may lead us to question Jesus and His decision making – His establishment of the Church – His ministry of the salvation of sinners.

Surely He could have picked someone other than Judas – someone more reliable, more trustworthy. You mean like Peter, who betrayed Jesus three times with his denials? Or Thomas, who refuses to believe what Jesus had told him beforehand – that He would be raised from the dead?

Think about it – there are none who are reliable, trustworthy. Thanks be to God that His salvation is dependent solely upon the work of His Son, Jesus Christ – and not the reliability and faithfulness of those He calls to shepherd His flock.

Unlike Peter, and Thomas, who turned from their sin and trusted in Jesus – Judas did not follow Jesus in faith. Instead, just as his betrayal led to the death of Jesus – so his despair over his sin, led to his own death.

But the Scriptures HAD to be fulfilled. Yes, “his camp” becomes desolate, with no one to take up the family name – but, “it is necessary” that “another take his office.”

Necessary? Judas HAS to be replaced? Can't the Church carry out her mission with only 11 Apostles? Is Matthias so special, so necessary, that he be numbered with the eleven apostles? After all, the Bible never speaks of him again.

It IS necessary to have 12 Apostles – not because everything is dependent upon these men – but because this is how the Lord has ordered His Church. Just as the Church of the Old Testament was made up on the 12 tribes of Israel – so with the 12 Apostles, the Lord gathers His New Testament Church. Nothing will be lacking. The Lord will have His whole Church.

So, into the Apostolic Office the Lord will place His man. It has to be one who was with Jesus during His entire earthly ministry – one who has been catechized by Jesus over this three-year period.

This man had to be with Jesus in the beginning, from the baptism of John – to be an ear-witness of the Father's voice saying, “This is my beloved Son.” This man had to be an eye-witness of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

He has to meet all of these requirements because God is calling him to be His witness – His martyr – one who is willing to give up his life for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. Matthias is one who meets these requirements – and the Lord chooses him – and sends him to preach His Gospel, to catechize the Church with the doctrine he has received from Christ Himself – to defend the faith, even unto death.

It is necessary for sinners to hear the preaching of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. It is necessary for sinners like Judas who sold out his Lord – for sinners who think their sin is too wicked, too much for God to forgive.

It is necessary for sinners like Peter – who, in the face of peer pressure, opposition, potential harm – decided to save himself and sacrificed the Christ. It is necessary for sinners to hear the resurrected Christ who comes to them and says – “I love you” – “I laid down my life for you” – “I do not forsake you, but reconcile you to the Father, and give you my peace.”

It is necessary for sinners like us – who are no different than Judas, Peter, Thomas, Mary the mother of our Lord – and all others who have rebelled against the Lord and are in need of His deliverance and salvation. If such rescue were dependent upon us – we would all, like Judas, despair – and none would be saved.

It is necessary for Jesus to go to the Father and ask Him to send the Holy Spirit – so that He might create and sustain in us a faith that looks not to ourselves, or any other man – but only to Jesus Christ for our redemption.

Dearly beloved, it is necessary for you to be gathered to our Lord Jesus Christ today – to hear that He who died for you, HAS BEEN raised to life again – so that you may see and believe that all your sin HAS BEEN taken away.

That’s why He gathers you to His Table – so that His called minister may put into your mouth His very own Body and Blood, sacrificed to atone for the sin of the whole world – and raised to life again, for you, for the forgiveness of all your sin.

All that the Lord Jesus Christ has done – is necessary “for you” – so that in due time, when He returns again – He may resurrect your body, to life everlasting. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.