

~ Saint Matthias ~



Feast Day of Saint Matthias is May 14th

Matthias was born in Judaea in the 1st Century AD. According to the Acts of the Apostles, he was chosen by God through the apostles to replace Judas Iscariot following the latter's betrayal of Jesus and his subsequent death. His calling as an apostle is unique, in that he was selected via the casting of lots following Jesus' Ascension into Heaven, though Matthias knew Jesus throughout his earthly ministry.

There is no mention of a Matthias among the lists of disciples or followers of Jesus in the three synoptic gospels, but according to Acts, he had been with Jesus from his baptism by John until Jesus' Ascension.

In the days following, Peter proposed that the assembled disciples, who numbered about 120, nominate two men to replace Judas. They chose Joseph called Barsabbas and Matthias. Then they prayed, "Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all [men], show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

No further information about Matthias is to be found in the canonical New Testament. Even his name is variable: the Syriac version of Eusebius calls him throughout not Matthias but "Tolmai", not to be confused with Bartholomew (which means Son of Tolmai), who was one of the twelve original Apostles; Clement of Alexandria refers once to Zacchaeus in a way which could be read as suggesting that some identified him with Matthias;

St. Matthias was brought before the council of high elders as a "seducer" for preaching Christ as the son of God. Matthias, inspired by the Holy Ghost demonstrated with firm argument that him who they crucified to a cross was the Son of God. Enraged, they sentenced him to be stoned alive. They seized him and cast him out in the city to carry on the punishment. The enraged Jews cast many stones at him until a Roman Soldier beheaded him while he was half dead.

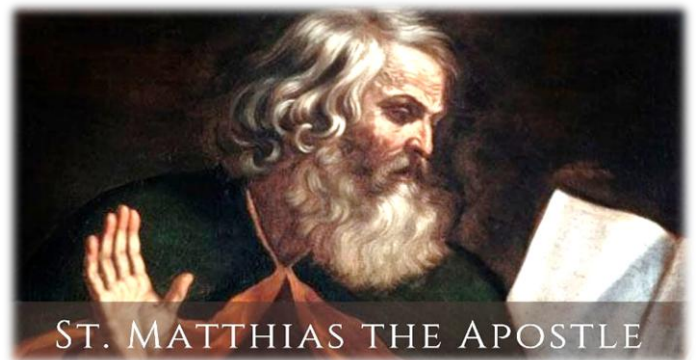
It is claimed that St Matthias' remains were brought to Italy through Empress Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine I (the Great); part of these relics were interred in the Abbey of Santa Giustina, Padua, and the remaining in the Abbey of St. Matthias, Trier, Germany. According to Greek sources, the remains of the apostle are buried in the castle of Gonio Apsaros, Georgia.

All information concerning the ministry and death of Matthias is vague and contradictory. The tradition of the Greeks says that St. Matthias spread Christianity around Cappadocia and on the coasts of the Caspian Sea, residing chiefly near the port Hyssus. According to Nicephorus, Matthias first preached the Gospel in Judaea, then in Aethiopia and was crucified. An extant Coptic *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*, places his activity similarly in "the city of the cannibals" in Aethiopia. A marker placed in the ruins of the Roman fortress at Gonio (Apsaros) in the modern Georgian region of Adjara claims that Matthias is buried at that site.

The *Synopsis of Dorotheus* contains this tradition: "Matthias preached the Gospel to barbarians and meat-eaters in the interior of Ethiopia, where the sea harbor of Hyssus is, at the mouth of the river Phasis. He died at Sebastopolis, and was buried there, near the Temple of the Sun."

Clement of Alexandria observed: Not that they became apostles through being chosen for some distinguished peculiarity of nature, since also Judas was chosen along with them. But they were capable of becoming apostles on being chosen by Him who foresees even ultimate issues. Matthias, accordingly, who was not chosen along with them, on showing himself worthy of becoming an apostle, is substituted for Judas.

His feast day was originally celebrated in March, in the revision of the General Roman Calendar in 1969, it was transferred to May 14, so as not to celebrate it in Lent but instead in Eastertide close to the Solemnity of the Ascension, the event after which the Acts of the Apostles recounts that Matthias was selected to be ranked with the Twelve Apostles.



ST. MATTHIAS THE APOSTLE