

**Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year A
(June 8, 2008)**

How do we respond to the call of the Lord? Our readings today force us to look squarely at ourselves and our answer to God's call.

Jesus passes by Matthew, the tax collector. He sees something special there, something that others probably do not see because Matthew's profession was not one that invited approval. On the contrary – tax collectors were no more popular in Jesus' day than they are today. Besides that, Matthew was working for the hated Roman conquerors and occupiers of their country. Double reason for looking down on him. But Jesus saw something good there, loved him, and wanted him to follow him. And so, the story tells us, Matthew got up and followed him.

In the second reading, from the Letter to the Romans, Paul talks about Abraham who trusted that God's promise to him would be fulfilled despite the fact that it seemed utterly absurd. God had called him out of his native land and asked him to go on a journey to a foreign land with his wife Sara and his nephew Lot. To a foreign land where they did not speak the language, where customs were different. And add to that the fact that they were both elderly, at an age when long, difficult journeys into the unknown are usually not attempted. But Abraham responded. He trusted. He believed, as Paul tells us, "hoping against hope, and so became the father of many nations."

The spontaneous response of Matthew and Abraham contrasts tellingly with what we hear in the first reading. Through the prophet Hosea God chides the people because they are lukewarm and superficial. "Your piety is like a morning cloud," God says, "like the morning dew that passes away." God wants something more substantial. He asks for their hearts.

We don't normally hear God speaking to us as clearly as he did to the people through Hosea or to Abraham or as Jesus did to Matthew. But God calls us all and asks for a generous response. For most of us that simply means living our lives as best we can, fulfilling the responsibilities of our state in life to the best of our ability. But doing that consciously, believing it is what God wants us to do, full of faith and trust in the love that strengthens us and enables us to be the people God has called us to be.

But we might want to consider today whether God is calling us to something else. Think of people like Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa of Calcutta. They responded with incredible generosity to the needs of the poor of their own time and country. Obviously we are not all called to be Mother Teresa or Dorothy Day, but we are all called to something.

To respond to God the way Abraham and Matthew did, or the way Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa did means putting aside much of the baggage we carry around with us. It means being free of the attachment to material things that so often gets in the way and holds us back from answering God's call with all our hearts. We often make excuses. "I'm not holy enough. I'm not ready. Ask me when I've got my act together." Or perhaps we are like St. Augustine who prayed that God would give him the gift of chastity, but not yet! He wasn't quite ready. Ah, but when he was ready, when he realized that all those longings of his heart and flesh could not be fulfilled by all the pleasures the world had to offer, but only by God, then he answered like Isaiah the prophet: "Here I am, Lord, take me," and from that moment on his life was lived for God.

Jesus calls us all, he needs us all, to be his presence to one another. He calls us with all our faults and failings to visit the sick, the lonely, the bereaved and to reach out to those on the fringes of society. Can we, with grateful hearts, say "Yes," when Jesus calls?