

Bilingual Mass for Solemnity of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist

Sunday, September 20, 2026, at 11am. Celebrated by Monsignor Jameson.

Homily by Fr. Isaac Sagastume

There are two tables in the story of Saint Matthew.

At the first, he is sitting at the customs post, collecting taxes as in the painting on the right.

At the second, he is sharing a meal with Jesus, surrounded by tax collectors and sinners; and between those two tables comes the call: “Follow me.”

And in that movement from the customs post to a table we begin to see something of what a parish is meant to be and what St. Matthew’s is.

Today, as we celebrate the patron of this Cathedral, we remember the encounter that changed Matthew’s life, and we ask what it means for a community to bear his name—Matthew.

Other people would have seen the tax collector. They would have known his occupation, his reputation, the reasons to keep their distance.

Perhaps some had good reasons to resent him. But whatever they knew about Matthew, Jesus knew him as Matthew. He knew him by name.

There is something deeply hopeful about that. We can become so familiar with someone’s past that we don’t see the future that God has for them.

At that moment Christ comes and calls.

Matthew’s story is a hope for all of us because it says: my life can still become something I have not yet imagined, because God has not finished calling me.

That hope belongs at the heart of a parish and our parish.

People enter a church at very different moments in their lives. Some arrive with strong faith, others come with questions they hardly know how to express. Some come to give thanks...some come because something has fallen apart.

Some sit quietly in the back, unsure whether they belong to this great community.

Yet wherever we may be, we belong to the presence of Christ. Because here we receive his word, receive his mercy, and discover that he is still calling us again and again.

“Follow me”—And Matthew gets up and follows.

But the Gospel does not leave us with that. Almost immediately, this panorama widens. There is another table—a meal and more people.

In Luke's account, the tax collector, named Levi, gives a great banquet for Jesus in his home. The encounter is no longer only between Jesus and Matthew but an encounter with an entire community of people. Matthew becomes excited by the call that he welcomes EVERYONE. The encounter opens outward. Everyone is welcome to his house.

Matthew has received Christ's welcome, and now he makes room for others to meet him.

There, around the Lord, a community begins to take shape. People who might have remained strangers (with different ideas, backgrounds) they sit at the same table—listening, encountering, and a different life becomes possible.

FROM AN ENCOUNTER, A COMMUNITY IS FORMED. AND FROM THAT COMMUNITY, A MISSION BEGINS.

This very encounter—this community is at the foundation of our parish history.

This cathedral has seen very important historical moments. In November 1963, President John F. Kennedy's funeral Mass was celebrated here. The Red Mass gathers judges, lawyers, and public officials to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Mother Teresa visited in 1974. Saint John Paul II celebrated Mass here in 1979. Pope Francis prayed here with the bishops of the United States in 2015.

This parish has been a meeting place for the life of Washington and the life of the universal Church but that was not its origins.

The history of Saint Matthew's unfolded in homes, classrooms, and neighborhood streets.

The history of our parish describes a mission that runs through the generations: gathering a community and mobilizing its people to respond to the needs of others. That has been the heart of St. Matthew. We are a people who move.

That word, mobilizing, deserves our attention. A parish brings together people with different gifts and experiences. Through a shared life of faith, those gifts can become a source of hope for an entire neighborhood.

Monsignor Edward Buckey came to Saint Matthew's as a young priest in 1901, serving alongside Monsignor Lee. Over the years, he acquired properties around the parish and put several of them to charitable use.

In 1911, he founded the Catholic Home for Aged Ladies. Later, a property at Logan Circle became Christopher Inn, through the efforts of members of the parish's Saint Vincent de Paul Society. It offered food and shelter to unemployed men, homeless men, and men leaving prison. According to our parish history, it served more than eight thousand individuals in its first year.

Imagine the lives behind that number...

A man who had lost his work. Someone with nowhere to sleep. Someone leaving prison, wondering whether anyone would give him a chance to begin again.

And a parish community responding: *there is a place for you.*

Another property eventually became a home for young Catholic working women. Across different stages of life, the parish recognized needs and found ways to respond.

In these stories, we can recognize something of Matthew's table: people brought together around Christ, learning little by little to make room for others.

That same movement helped give rise to other parish communities.

German-speaking Catholics gathered in the basement of the original Saint Matthew's Church before establishing Saint Mary Mother of God Parish.

And in 1858, Black Catholics from Saint Matthew's began the community that would become Saint Augustine's, establishing a school and chapel under the patronage of Blessed Martin de Porres.

Our history includes people who received a welcome and people who labored to make that welcome more faithful to the Gospel. That work and that hope is the core foundation of our parish and our community.

Before you had the many different social clubs and bars on Connecticut Ave. You had the Cathedral Club which opened its doors in 1947 and provided a place for dancing and socializing at 1814 N St. NW. From which many marriages resulted and provided a place of welcome for those returning from the war.

And this history continued as Spanish-speaking Catholics made Washington their home.

Saint Matthew's became one of the early centers of ministry to them. By 1957, announcements in Spanish were appearing in the parish bulletin. The first recorded in the Archdiocese. Monsignor Martin Christopher helped develop the apostolate to Spanish-speaking Catholics. English classes began here in 1965, and weekly Spanish Masses in 1968 and it continues to this day.

Father Seán O'Malley, later Cardinal O'Malley, helped lead the wider ministry to Spanish-speaking Catholics. In 1974, he organized a Good Friday procession that brought more than a thousand people to this Cathedral.

Think of what those beginnings meant. Today people come asking for marriage certificates or baptismal records remembering *Padre Sean*.

Christ calls people into communion with himself, and they discover that they have something to give. Those who find a home help make a home for others.

This is St. Matthew's Cathedral. Here we don't just blend into the beauty of the marble or the lighting ...we are what make up the beauty of this Cathedral.

These walls have history, and we are part of that history. Baptisms, weddings, funerals. How many times I've heard from individuals who move far away: We live in Omaha and our Parish is... but we always come back here because its our home. We come back because it's the place where we sat at table with Lord.

The Lord's call reaches us in our own circumstances, with our own gifts and limitations. We may come here looking for consolation, we may come seeking direction, we may come uncertain of our faith and eventually help another person take the first steps toward him.

That is how disciples are formed and how missions begin.

Matthew could not have seen the whole road ahead when Jesus approached his table. He heard the call, rose, and followed. The rest unfolded through the community he encountered.

That is what Christ asks of us today: the willingness to place our lives at his disposal. To recognize that we all have a part in the mission of this parish that continues to this day.

Some of us will belong to Saint Matthew's for many years. Others will be here for only a season. But each of us can help shape this *welcome, embrace, friendship, invitation*. That results in this "follow me".

So today, as we honor Saint Matthew, let us hear Christ's words addressed to us again: "Follow me." This call of welcoming is renewed ever more deeply. Throughout all these years—through our many pastors-rectors. Through our longest-serving Rector.

May we answer with the generosity this moment asks of us. May we too hear his call where we sit together at this table where *all* are welcome.