

“The Little Known Disciple” – April 30, 2017
By Wayne J. Schneider – Credo in Unum Deum

The Little Known Disciple

Ac6s 1:15 – 17, 21-26

Little is known about Matthias the disciple who took Judas’ place. Following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, the disciples met in Jerusalem anticipating what was to happen next. Yet, the group felt incomplete after the disgraceful death of Judas, and they were mourning the loss of their beloved Jesus. The disciples were there in an upper room, obedient to the instructions Jesus had given them to stay in the city and wait.

This was not “down time” where nothing was done. The Disciples were anticipating a new beginning, and dialoged regarding what this would look like. They were bursting with hope and anticipation. They prayed. They worshiped. They told Jesus’ stories. They remembered. They asked the Holy Spirit to help them understand the gifts God has given them for ministry. And, while they waited, their numbers grew.

It is during this time that the early church enters a process to ‘call’ someone to be the Apostle to replace Judas. There had been twelve but now they were eleven. The entire procedure is Spirit-led and Spirit-driven. They prayerfully choose two candidates from the community of those who have followed Jesus from the beginning. The candidates’ names were: Justus and Matthias. The community drew lots, and Matthias is chosen.

Please note that the ‘call’ involved both community discernment and Spiritual direction. Both are vital. There are no political parties, no campaigning, the community considers whose spiritual gifts might be best fitted for the ministry. Notice they don’t ask for volunteers or accept the first to apply. Neither do they choose the most popular or the person with the most power. This is not an election; it is a divine call. This is not a matter of luck or accidental choice. The casting of lots

was understood to be a way to discern God's will. The call of Matthias as the twelfth Disciple is God's call and a model for all of us.

Following his call, we don't know much about Matthias. As with the majority of the Disciples, he does ministry outside of the limelight, unlike Sts. Peter, James, and John. But, he is not a bystander. He is one of the innumerable faithful generations of God's servants. Although he is one of the Twelve, he is also one who proclaims God's word in the vineyard.

Although we do not know the specifics of his life, we know he was called to continue the teaching, fellowship, and prayer of Jesus. He was called to generate healing. To proclaim and practice justice, and care for the poor. Ministry happens through him but it is not about him.

What about the other guy, Justus? He too was with Jesus from the beginning. We really only know his name: Joseph called Barsabbas, also known as Justus. He may not be numbered among the twelve but he was among the faithful. The Book of Acts is filled with outsiders, the marginalized, coming in and insiders going out. In the following chapter, the Holy Spirit drives the twelve Disciples out at Pentecost to share the Gospel, the "Good News," speaking in languages that the Spirits give them.

And, of course, there is Saul, the persecutor of the early church, who was transformed into St. Paul, pastor supreme. All of these responded positively to God's call to ministry and service, along with women and men who are nameless throughout history.

Whenever I tend to think that I am on the bench or the sidelines, not in the game; I remind myself of Matthias. It does not matter who we are, we are called by the Spirit to live lives of service to our savior and God our King. The Holy Spirit may need to remind you today to open your spiritual eyes to your Spiritual gifts. I am reminded again of a small framed needlecraft a teen gave me at our first church as pastor. It read: "**God Don't Make June**". Indeed God does not waste anyone.

God wants to use us in ways we may not be able to imagine. Yet, God's call remains: ministry and mission awaits. The Holy Spirit prepares and provides. We are a part of a countless community called to prayer and discernment; challenged to identify each other's Spiritual gifts, and to encourage each other in ministry and service. Let us go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Alleluia. Amen.