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by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)  
[patrickjmarrin@gmail.com](mailto:patrickjmarrin@gmail.com).

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“Jesus said to Matthew, ‘Follow me,’ and he got up and followed him” (Matt 9:9).

### **Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and evangelist**

[Eph 4:1-7, 11-13](#); [Matt 9:9-13](#)

Pope Francis once described the importance to his own conversion of a painting by the Italian artist Caravaggio of Jesus pointing at Matthew in a tavern surrounded by his fellow tax collectors. The scene conveys the power of Jesus looking at someone, seeing what they were but also seeing who they were to become by God’s mercy. The pope chose a Latin phrase describing this merciful look as his papal motto: *Miserando atque eligendo* (“mercied and chosen”).

We all need this “look of love” to be called forth to become the person we really are in God’s merciful gaze. Our very existence is a matter of being seen and known by God. This is the beacon of reality that guides us through the distortions and false starts that mark our human development toward our divine destiny -- life with God.

Matthew, mired in the sinful lifestyle of a tax collector, someone who conspired with the Roman occupation to extort payment from his own community, is seen and called by Jesus to be an Apostle of mercy by being rescued from dissipation and compromise. His conversion is the model for our own. Without the grace of God’s gaze, we cannot find our way or become our true selves.

Isn’t this the Gospel in most intimate terms? We are rescued by love, then sent to rescue others by being merciful with them as God is merciful with us. Matthew the evangelist, whom we celebrate today, reminds us that this is the heart of the Christian life --to live in the loving gaze of God, even in our sinfulness, yet constantly

called to move forward to realize God's plan for us.

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