



St Marylebone  
Parish Church

## St Matthias 2021

Friday 9.30am

The RC Benedictine Monks of the Abbey of St Matthias at Trier have custody of the tomb of today's Apostle.

The monks are not at all convinced of the reality of the relics and the tomb and they are amazingly disinterested by the whole thing. They're an amazing bunch: a smallish community, traditional choir monks to sing the offices, but quite a number have jobs outside – one is a judge, another an accountant – in order to support the Community and live their shared vocation. They also have an excellent cook. Benedictines are, of course, not vowed to poverty... and you can apparently tell from the puddings...

The Saintly Matthias whether he rests in genteel baroque surroundings on the Luxembourg-German border or not, has several important things for us today.

The first is the importance of The Twelve. 12 wasn't just a nice number Jesus settled on, the Office of the Apostles as the first Bishops, as the successor to the Jewish prophecies of God's enduring Covenant with His people, their ministry at the end of time to judge the 12 tribes of Israel, their status as linchpins of our DNA and carriers of meaning across history in the human family of the Church remains. This is clear in the words of Jesus throughout the Gospels and in the testimony of St John in Revelation – we are built on the Apostles for our foundation, God has *chosen* a Church that is One, Holy, Catholic and *Apostolic*, on purpose. And this is clear too in the very necessity of replacing Judas. The 12 must be complete, just as 2 sons of Adam and 2 daughters of Eve must take up the 4 thrones at Cair Paravel in Narnia.

Secondly, today St Matthias empowers us with His prayers. We need the support of our heavenly family. Flawed, or (as in Matthias's case) faithful from the beginning and unnoticed and late to be recognized (a very important vocation there...) it does not matter.

So we're renewed in our apostolic foundations today, our belonging, *belonging* to God's Church – a Church He has made.

And secondly, we're comforted to know that even when we are not faithful, as Peter wasn't; even if we're late to be recognised, as Matthias was latterly elected to the 12, it doesn't matter – God is faithful and will use us in whatever sorry state we offer ourselves to Him, or however hidden and unnoticed we are by Church and world.

Finally, St Matthias teaches us the value of not being chosen at all.

Or rather, 'Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus)' does. We know little about St Matthias, we know even less about Justus. This was *his* moment – a place in history, an opportunity to do something truly great for God and man, to take his seat amongst the 12 thrones... and for Justus it was not to be. Justus was not chosen to be an apostle, indeed he was chosen *not* to be. He wasn't not chosen by God's Holy Spirit, he *was* chosen by God to not be an Apostle. He was chosen, presumably, to *be Justus*, a baptized follower of Christ Jesus. To live for love of God and men. There is no higher calling in God's household, and Justus was chosen for this way of humility and obscurity, no judgement seats or apostolic foundation-stones, instead something much, much greater for Justus – to have no other status, calling, security, purpose or means of fulfilment than Jesus Christ, who emptied Himself not clinging to His divine status, and taking that of a slave. St Matthias teaches us, or rather Justus does, that there is no '*just*' when we talk of our baptism or service or identity in Christ. That when we are not chosen or preferred or acclaimed it is because we *are* chosen, by the One who calls us.