

**Each one of us is called by Christ**

When I was university chaplain in Cambridge in the early '90s, we had a lot of students taking instruction to become Catholics. I always asked them why they wanted to join the Church: What was the catalyst? The reasons they gave were all very different, but Helen's story was not untypical. A third year medic, Helen lived in a house with four other students, but she noticed how every Sunday afternoon one of the girls would slip out for an hour. One week, she plucked up courage to ask where she went: *To Mass at Fisher House. Do you want to come?* The following week, Helen went along and was so taken with the Mass, she said it was like coming home; it was magical; she'd found the very thing she'd been looking for. Helen went on to be received into the Church; she now lives in Wales, a surgeon married with five children.

*Jesus said Follow me; leaving everything, he got up and followed him.* In the Gospel, we heard the story of the call of Levi, otherwise known as St. Matthew, a sinner, a tax-collector, a man despised by his fellow-Jews for collaborating with the Romans. Yet the moment he heard the voice of Jesus calling him personally, a Voice laced with the Holy Spirit piercing his heart, he got up and left everything to follow Him. As Jesus said: *It is not those who are well who need a doctor but the sick. I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners to repentance.* Matthew's life was gradually transformed by responding to Jesus. He became one of the Twelve and the author of the First Gospel; and after the Resurrection, he evangelised Persia and Ethiopia, where he offered up his life in a martyr's death. In other words, from an unpromising beginning, this man became one of the greatest saints of Church history. Indeed, without him, we wouldn't be where we are today.

I thank you for being here today with your family and friends, priests, sponsors and catechists. Thank you for responding like Levi to the call of Jesus to be fully united with Him in His one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church. I know that each one of you has a wonderful story to tell and I look forward to meeting you after. To be Catholic today is exciting, for it's so countercultural. In this 21C, a new culture is emerging, full of promise and potential yet secular and laced with dangers that threaten human dignity and freedom. This is why as Catholics we have a crucial anthropological mission within our society. The Church has to act like a sentinel, a watchman, a lookout supporting what is good yet warning of danger. In this context, it's never been so urgent that we love our faith, that we live what we profess, that we attractively communicate what we believe. So thank you for responding to Jesus. Thank you for becoming His disciple. Thank you for joining Christ's Church, under Pope Francis and the bishops, successors of the Apostles.

*I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners to repentance.* Faith is God's gift, the call of Jesus, the inspiration of the Spirit, inviting our response to put it into practice. Sometimes people expect a perfect Church, but that's not the one Jesus set up. The Catholic Church is for sinners, for Levi, for people like you and me who need to grow in faith, hope and love. So in this Liturgy today, in which we say Yes to the Lord, let us thank Him for the gift of faith and for calling us to be His disciple. Let us pray for all who have helped us reach this point in our spiritual journey, especially those in

our parish communities. Assisted by the prayers of Mary Immaculate and St. Edmund, let us pray for the gift of perseverance, that we may practise our faith all the days of our life and so one day merit to be with Jesus for ever in heaven.