

LIFE'S GOAL, THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN

When I was a university chaplain in Cambridge a few years ago, 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 quite different, but I remember one girl's story. Helen was a third year medic, who lived in a house with four other students. Every Sunday, she noticed one of the girls going out for an hour or so in the late afternoon. One week, she asked the girl where she went: *To Mass at the chaplaincy. Do you want to come?* The following week, Helen went along and was so taken with the Mass, she found it fascinating; she said it was like coming home, the very thing deep down she'd been looking for. Helen went on to be received into the Church; she now lives in Wales, a GP married with five children.

In today's Gospel, we hear about another convert, Levi, St. Matthew, a tax-collector. Jesus *passing by* called him personally to follow Him: *Follow me he said, and leaving everything, he got up and followed him.* The moment he heard Jesus's sweet Voice piercing his heart, he got up and left all. Matthew's life was turned upside down. He spent time with Jesus. He listened to His teaching. He witnessed His miracles and was transformed by His love. St. Matthew became one of the Twelve. He wrote the First Gospel and after Pentecost, went on mission to Ethiopia, where he suffered a martyr's death. In other words, from a simple beginning, Matthew's life was totally changed. He put everything at the Lord's service, his time, his talents, his treasure. He became in time a great saint whom we much venerate today.

Brothers and sisters, I thank you immensely for being here today with your families and friends, priests, sponsors and catechists. Thank you for answering the call of Jesus. Thank you for becoming His disciple within His one, holy Catholic Church, in communion with Francis our Pope and Philip your Bishop. Every single member of the Church has a unique story to tell. Many were brought up in the Faith; others like you joined later; still others left but then underwent a re-conversion. But like St. Matthew, each one of us has not only a unique story to tell but a unique task or purpose to fulfil. Matthew became an apostle. Helen became a wife, a mother, a parishioner. When you are received this Easter, your task next year is to ask God what it is He wants of you. Indeed, I would really urge you to undertake the diocesan *Called and Gifted Programme*. It's a great help in discerning the charisms and gifts God has given you for service in the world and in the Church.

*I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners to repentance.* In Britain today as Catholics we have a crucial task: to proclaim the Gospel, to influence our culture, to spread to others the teachings and values of Jesus Christ, Who is the only way to human happiness. So while today I thank you and I welcome you into the Church, I'd like to ask you to promise that you'll be faithful to the Lord all the days of your life: that you will continue to practise your faith. Discern the gifts God has given you and put them at Christ's service. But also, strive to pass on your faith to a friend. Indeed, like Helen, next week why not ask a friend to come along with you to Mass so they too can see the love that drives us along? So now, may the Blessed Virgin Mary and may all our patron saints pray for you all the days of your life; indeed, may they one day help you to reach life's goal, the happiness of heaven.