

St Matthias - 14th May

Acts 1:21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." 23 So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. 24 Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen 25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." 26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

The Old Testament provides many examples of "casting lots" -drawing out a marked stick or stone to determine an outcome when there is uncertainty. However this procedure is never mentioned after the coming of the Holy spirit at Pentecost, which took place after Matthias' selection as Judas' replacement in the Twelve.

Matthias is represented by artists as one of the twelve in a series, as in this example by **Simone Martini**, a painter from Siena in around 1317-19



and much later (1612) by **Rubens** in his Apostles series, like SS Philip and James. Like them, Matthias carries the implement of his martyrdom – an axe, since traditionally he was beheaded.



A legend grew up that his body had been discovered by St Helena in Jerusalem and taken back to Italy, where it was placed, along with the bodies of other martyrs, in a church dedicated to **St Justina (Guistina)** in Padua. A large chapel in the church, which has been rebuilt several times, is dedicated to St Matthias, with an elaborate 16th century altar containing the relics.



In 1635 the brilliant French printmaker **Jacques Callot** produced a series showing the martyrdom of all twelve apostles. These violent images include one of St Matthias being stabbed while before an altar, which for us might recall the death of Archbishop Romero, murdered as he stood before the altar after preaching in a small hospital church in 1980. Callot's series was done just after he had finished his deeply shocking series "The Great Miseries and Misfortunes of War" which has been described as "the first anti-war statement in European art." It was based on his experience of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) which ravaged Europe, originating in conflict between Protestants and Catholics, but erupting into a war between state powers.

In all Callot's Apostles series Christ appears in radiant light in the upper part of the print, as in the account of the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts, praying as he dies "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge". (Acts 7 56-60).



After Callot – Martyrdoms of the Twelve Apostles