

Homily: May 14, 2024

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

Today, we celebrate God choosing St. Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot. Matthias had to be a person who remained in Jesus' love. God chose us in Baptism to remain in Jesus' love. Forty-seven years ago, God ordained me, through his church, to remain in, proclaim, and celebrate God's love. We all remain in God's love in humanly limited and conditional ways. So, we express our trust in God's compassion, calling out, "Lord, have mercy!" We act, speak, and think in a loving way about/toward others.

"Remain in my love" is Jesus's key request to his disciples and us, his baptized disciples. There's a strong connection between Jesus' call to remain in his love and the requirement of the apostles as they looked for a candidate to replace Judas. He had to be one of those who witnessed Jesus from his baptismal beginning [of his ministry] to his resurrection. Although not explicitly mentioned, the apostles wanted someone who had seen and heard the proclamation, attitude, and actions of love by this man, Jesus, the incarnation of God's love. This divinely chosen new apostle had to have witnessed, REMEMBERED, and REMAINED IN THE EXPERIENCES of God's love as revealed by Jesus. Then he would also be able to proclaim and tell the stories about Jesus—from the time Jesus was baptized in the Jordan until he was crucified, died, and rose as the Risen Christ, who resumed proclaiming "Peace be with you" and entrusting the apostles to proclaim forgiveness – to help people everywhere perceive themselves as beloved daughters and sons of God.

Jesus remained in the love of God during his mountain-top nights of prayer. Jesus gives us a model for doing the same. So, I invite you and me to take a minute to recall one or two precious moments of God's love for us—through other people, events, scripture, nature, or other channels. We, too, must remain in Jesus' love –reading and proclaiming scripture.

On this anniversary, I become aware that I have actually experienced 49 years of reflecting on the scripture's meaning for myself and then sharing weekly homilies with my [our] sisters and brothers of the jungles of Papua, Indonesia, since I arrived there in 1974. These weekly reflections and homilies were crucial moments for me in remaining in the love of Jesus, God, and their Holy Spirit. Proclaiming the Good News to new Christians of the tidal swamp and rainforest helped my faith mature week by week. This faith-growing process of remaining in God's love continues for me until now, May 14, 2024.

Jesus often took mountaintop moments to remember and remain in God's love, and so must we. So, I invite you and me to take a minute to recall one or two occasions of God's love coming to us as individuals through another person, nature, an event, Scripture, or other channels.