



## The message that defeats evil

Feast of Saint Matthew  
(September 21)  
Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13  
Psalm 19:2-5  
Matthew 9:9-13

"Their message goes out through all the earth," we proclaim in the responsorial Psalm. What message?

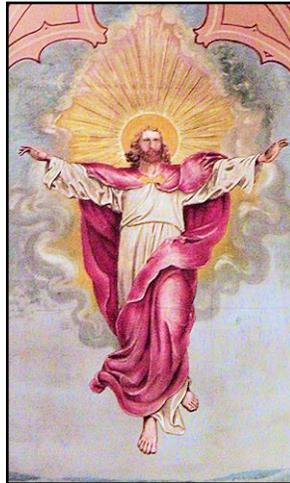
The reading in Ephesians contains the core of our message. Why is this message so important to spread throughout *all* the earth? All of *today's* world?

Because it puts a stop to evil. It's the world's salvation. We are not called to wait for the Second Coming of Christ, relying on a future Jesus to drive out evil. Jesus is here now: in us. We are the earthly body of Christ, and we have a message that drives out evil! It's a message of love that has the power to change the world, and it happens whenever Jesus ministers to others through us, speaks to others through us, and enables us to be like him so that we actually live the message.

Do you ever wonder why God "allows" evil to continue? It's not his fault.

Jesus won the battle against evil more than 2000 years ago when he conquered the power of sin by living a holy life, taking our sins to the cross and then overcoming death and destruction through his resurrection. We are called to learn from his example and act on it.

Today we bring that same victory into the world by "living a life worthy of our calling," treating others (*all* others) with "humility, gentleness, and patience, putting up with each other lovingly" through the empowerment of Christ's Holy Spirit "who is the binding force



of peace." This is how we defeat evil using the power of Jesus.

Sending military forces against terrorists can bring us some protection, but *both* we *and* our enemies have to want to live together in peace before the bumper-sticker slogans of "give peace a chance" and "make love, not war" have any real meaning.

Likewise, while putting criminals in prison does stop the evil they were doing in society, it's not enough: It does not save them from their sins, nor does it cure the damage they did to others. And the death penalty certainly doesn't stop evil.

In the Gospel passage, we see a man who deserved to be punished. And the people (and their money) needed to be protected from him. As a successful tax collector, Matthew was a cheater, a liar, a traitor, and a thief. Jesus looked past his sins and found a place in his heart where goodness existed. If we want to conquer evil, this is where we, too, must look.

For Christ's message of love to go out through all the earth and transform it enough to prevent evil-doers from *becoming* evil in the first place, we have to live it and consciously spread it. We have to overcome our own behaviors that work against love. We have to live out Ephesians 4 in every situation. We have to be so good at this that we can authentically invite others to do the same. And we have to inspire more Christians to do the same -- many more.

We cannot convert evil-doers who don't want to change, but we can certainly spread Christ's gift of peace much more widely than we have been doing. Every act of love in the face of evil conquers evil. Isn't it time the Body of Christ on earth started making a bigger difference in the world? What are *you* doing to further his mission?