

GOSPEL PEARLS

The doctor of souls

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As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:9-13)

Jesus is the doctor of souls. Just as a true doctor is not afraid to be near the sick, Jesus does not mind being near the misery of sinners or the superficial judgments of those who feel righteous. Even the man who will become the Apostle Matthew, before Jesus' call, was a publican, a tax collector considered a sinner by the Israelites. This was because of Matthew's direct collaboration with the Romans and because when collecting tributes he demanded higher amounts than what was due in order to pocket the surplus for himself. Let us, therefore, admit we are sinners and, therefore, in need of the forgiveness of the divine doctor of souls.