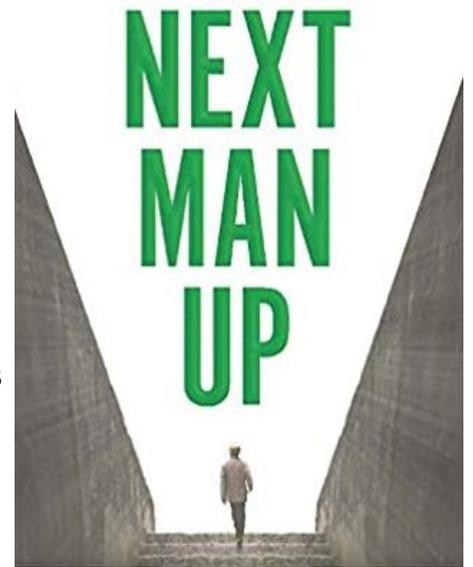


In professional sports, there is an expression, “next man up.” It refers to the unfortunate reality that during a sports season, players are going to get injured. The backup has to be ready to step in and play. Sometimes the backup player winds up becoming the better player. A legendary example of this comes from the 1925 New York Yankees. Wally Pipp, the starting first baseman, was either injured in a game or at practice. It's still a debated point among some sports aficionados. Either way, he was struggling at the plate. He was replaced by Lou Gehrig, who went on to set a record for consecutive games played, along with having a Hall of Fame career. The “next man up” sometimes proves to be the better man.



Today is the feast day of Saint Matthias. He is sometimes referred to as the thirteenth Apostle. Matthias was the replacement for Judas. *The Gospel of Saint Matthew* says that Judas hung himself, after returning the thirty pieces of silver that he was paid by the Jewish chief priests and elders for betraying Jesus.

In the first reading from today's Mass, Peter stood up among one hundred and twenty fellow believers and told them that they must replace Judas. It was important that they chose someone who was with them since the beginning of Jesus' public ministry through His Death and Resurrection. It was important that the person they picked witnessed the Resurrected Jesus. They wanted a good-hearted man, who they could trust and who could effectively evangelize others. The choice came down to two men, Joseph (also known as Justus) and Matthias. They prayed to the Lord and casted lots which was a Jewish practice. By casting lots, they asked the Lord to make the final choice. The Lord chose Matthias. Although not much is known for sure about his subsequent life, we know he was respected by his fellow believers both in life and after his death. Hence, today we celebrate his life and his service to the Church. It is believed he died a martyr.

Do you live your life with a “next man up” attitude? Are you ready for whatever life has in store for you? On one hand, that's hard to do. On the other hand, it's not. There's only so much that can go wrong in our lives. Also, we all have a limited range of influence. That stated, we should always be ready to rise in a moment of crisis. If someone is sick or having a bad day, we should be willing to step in and help out. There are always opportunities to help out in times of crisis. For a Catholic, everything flows from our Faith. If we are prayerful and hardworking, when life gives us lemons, we will be ready to make lemonade.