

MAY 14 2026 FATHER PETER JAE CHOI

After Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and took his own life, the eleven remaining disciples had to replace Judas with a new 12th apostle, as the number 12 represented the new 12 tribes of Israel. The requirements were that this person had to be a witness to Jesus' ministry, from the beginning. From Baptism until the Ascension. The eleven disciples picked two candidates, Joseph called Barsabbas and Matthias. They prayed to God and cast lots. That's how Matthias was chosen.

This may sound very strange that they used a method like the lottery to make such important decisions like choosing a new apostle. But come to think of it, we do it too. We do a coin toss before every sports game to see who will get the ball first. It's our way of making sure things are fair, free of favoritism. Both teams have a 50-50 chance. But, drawing the lot actually goes far beyond trying to be fair. It is mentioned 70 times in the Old Testament and seven times in the New Testament. The Israelites believed that random events, independent of human causes, were seen as a direct expression of God's will. So Joshua cast lots to distribute the Promised Land among the tribes of Israel. Priests and Levites used lots to decide who would serve in the Temple at specific times. And the apostles after having spent time praying, they cast lots, to pick the new 12th apostle.

Although we no longer use the lottery to make important decisions in the Church, we do, however, recognize that there is no such thing as coincidence. Only God Incidences. Nothing escapes God's knowledge and His plan. Our task is for us to discern God's will and faithfully carry it out.

We all know that God doesn't think like us. That's because we can only see the outward appearance, but God sees what is in the heart. Do you remember when Prophet Samuel was told to go and anoint who would be the new King of Israel? He was impressed by Jesse's older sons who were tall and handsome. But God rejected all of them. It was then the shepherd boy David was called. Our tendency is to look for natural abilities and talents. But God doesn't need to rely on our ability. He just needs our availability. Jesus reminded us that there is no greater love than the one who lays down his life for his friends. Jesus has done that for us. He laid down His life for us on the Cross to save us from our sin and death, and made us His best friends. How about us? Will you put Jesus as your best friend, ahead of everybody else and everything else in your life?

Some of you may remember me sharing my childhood trauma and father-wound from last year. Basically my father was not only unavailable, he was also abusive to me and the family, which left me with a deep emotional wound. I felt broken. I struggled with anger and depression throughout my childhood. Thankfully, God healed me of my broken heart during my first pilgrimage to Medjugorje in 2023. Last year when I was the main celebrant at St. James church in Medjugorje, I felt God was asking me to share my story with the pilgrims at Mass. So I did. Soon after I came back from Medjugorje I received an invitation to come and speak at Worcester's Catholic Men's conference with about 900 men attending. When I shared the story of my childhood trauma and Fatherwound at the conference, I could tell that my story resonated with a lot of the men. God was using me and the story of my brokenness to comfort and heal others.

While I was attending the Worcester Catholic Men's conference, I met Kevin Matthews. He was a legendary radio broadcaster. At the peak of his career in the 1980s and the 90s about 10 million listeners tuned into his show weekly. But unfortunately in 2011 he was let go. On his way home that day he felt like he needed to go buy flowers for his wife. It was on his way to the flowershop that God led him to the dumpster where he found the broken statue of Mary discarded there. It was at that moment that God spoke to him, "Will you deny me and my mother?" He felt compelled to bring that broken statue of Mary home. He tried to get it fixed, but then he realised he was broken just as the broken statue of Mary. He felt the broken statue of Mary reflected his own brokenness. When he met with Pope Leo this year, the Pope named the statue as the "Mary of the Broken." His story really resonated with me.

I've experienced brokenness in my life. Thankfully God's grace brought me healing. So often we are tempted to think that God only picks those who seem to have it all together. But the truth is you don't need to be perfect for God to use you as His instrument. God doesn't need your ability. He just needs your permission and your availability. Like God did with me and Kevin Matthews, if you give God the permission, He can use even your brokenness and inability to give glory to God. Remember, there are no coincidences, only God incidences.