

The Thirteenth Apostle – by Joan Chittester, from Winds of Change, 1986

(redacted version)

This is essentially the idea and the outline of Joan Chittester's poem, but it has been reworded.

Jesus called his apostles ... and they weren't ready

Jesus called Peter ... but he was unfaithful
weak
with a bad temper
lacking courage
Peter wasn't ready.

Jesus called James and John ... but they were ambitious
They followed Jesus for the wrong reason
for their own glory
They lacked purity of motivation
James and John weren't ready.

Jesus called Philip ... but he was blind
Philip couldn't see a spiritual reality
if he tripped over it
He lacked intelligence and insight
Philip wasn't ready

Jesus called Matthew ... but he was a crook
money-hungry
he had hurt people
he lacked an honest past
Matthew wasn't ready.

Jesus called Thomas ... but he lacked faith
He was a doubter
He wasn't around enough
He lacked trust in the invisible
Thomas wasn't ready.

Jesus called Andrew ... but he was a cynic
He could not take Jesus' words seriously
He still had the eye of the world
He lacked maturity
Andrew wasn't ready.

Jesus called Simon, the Zealot ... but he was a militant
with a belligerent streak
Simon was a social justice type
He lacked nuance
Simon wasn't ready.

Jesus called Luke ... but he wasn't tough enough
He was too gentle
He couldn't do the hard confrontation the gospel asks
He lacked the courage for prophecy
Luke wasn't ready.

Jesus called Mark ... but he was a stoic
a neurotic
He made an ideology out of suffering
Mark lacked joy and optimism
He wasn't ready.

Jesus called Bartholomew and James the Lesser ... but
they lacked talent
they had little to contribute
Bartholomew and James were shy introverts
lacking charisma
Bartholomew and James the Lesser weren't ready.

And today Jesus calls us ...
and we, what do we lack?
we lack it all ...
courage
purity of motivation
intelligence and insight
integrity
an honest past
trust in the invisible
maturity
nuance
courage for prophecy
joy and optimism
charisma

We, we aren't ready ...

but, and this is the thing ...

Jesus doesn't call the ready
Jesus calls the willing.