Sometimes certain words or short phrases in the scriptures – even brief passages – can slip by us because their function seems to be simply to move the narrative along. They don't seem that significant in themselves.

Perhaps that happened in today's first reading. We focused on the drama in the narrative, the selection of Mathias' by lot. Did we pay attention to why this was necessary? The reasons are not merely symbolic:

*He was numbered among us and was allotted a *share in this ministry.*
For it is written in the Book of Psalms: May another take his *office.*

An apostle was not simply an honorific title granted to twelve men. It was an office, a position in the Church. It began symbolically with the twelve, yet is an office that persists for the life of the Church, not simply for the short lifetime of a man.

It is a position of enduring authority in the Church, to be filled successively through the years. It is an office that would be multiplied to meet the needs of the Church as it grew.

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*I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.*

What does that mean: *apostolic* Church?
We say it every Sunday in the closing section of the Nicene Creed.

- The Church is apostolic because she is founded on the apostles: those twelve disciples that Jesus chose and instructed to proclaim the Gospel after he ascended, and to make disciples in all nations.

- The Church is apostolic because, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, she hands on faithfully the teachings of the apostles from one generation to the next.
• The Church is apostolic because she continues to be guided those who hold the apostolic office, the bishops.

“I gave them your word,” said Jesus, “and the world hated them ... I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one. ... Consecrate them in the truth.”

The bishops must engage the world, proclaiming the Gospel in every age and shepherding the flocks entrusted to them. They have to apply the teaching of the faith to the problems of the day. That is an important part of the ministry given to them by Christ. Yet when they do, the reaction is often dismissive at best or critical and harsh at worst.

Some of you may feel sorry for the bishops. Some of you may believe you could do a better job. Perhaps ...

“The whole Church is apostolic,” it says in the Catechism, “… she is ‘sent out’ into the whole world. All members of the Church share in this mission, though in various ways. The Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well.”

So, how is your apostolate coming along? Are you doing as well as the bishops?

Now neither I as a deacon, nor you as laity, have the actually pastoral and priestly office of the bishop, but we do have our part to play in their ministry.

By our baptism we are to bring the light of Christ into the world. We must proclaim the Gospel in ordinary activities of our lives.
We just had our primary elections here in Nebraska. Did you encourage family members, friends and coworkers to vote? Voting, you might want to remind them, is how we act in solidarity to promote the common good:

- It gives us a say in how we manage our public schools and universities.
- We choose those who will oversee how we manage public funds to serve the poor, see that justice prevails, and manage our resources for future generations.

I’ll bet you forgot to share with them your copy of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, that wonderful guide from the *U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*.

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If you are a businessperson, are you practicing your Christian calling and encouraging others to do the same?

- Do you help others to understand that our businesses have the potential to be a force for great good in society?
- Do you work with others to practice moral and ethical leadership so that our businesses may not simply turn a profit, but promote creativity and innovation, provide jobs that support human dignity, and products and services that contribute to the common good?

There is a new document just published this spring from the *Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace* called “*The Vocation of the Business Leader*,” maybe you could make it part of your apostolate.

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Do you have the courage to talk about the issues of today: marriage, immigration, abortion, healthcare, or unemployment? Do you understand the principles that should guide your discussion, those teachings of the apostles, which we must apply to the issues and debates of our time?

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Do you reach out to those who have fallen away from the faith? Have you asked them why they left and listened carefully to what they say? Have you invited them back? Are you prepared to share your story if they ask?
Jesus sent the apostles into the world. Therefore, the apostolic life reaches out to everyone, bringing to them the *Good News* that is the *Gospel of Jesus Christ*. It is a mission of love by which we fulfill the two great commandments: love of God and love of neighbor.

So believe in the *apostolic Church*. Pray for Archbishop George, Pope Benedict and all the bishops … and strengthen your own commitment to our shared apostolic life.