



LIVING THE GOSPEL

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
18th October, 2026

Theme: "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."

Gathering Prayer

Facilitator: Almighty ever-living God, grant that we may always conform our will to yours and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 22: 15-21

¹⁵ 'Then the Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap him in what he said. ¹⁶ And they send their disciples to him, together with some of the Herodians, to say, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in all honesty, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because human rank means nothing to you. ¹⁷ Give us your opinion, then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' ¹⁸ But Jesus was aware their malice and replied. 'You hypocrites! Why are you putting me to the test? ¹⁹ Show me the money you pay the tax with.' They handed him a denarius, ²⁰ and he said, 'Whose portrait is this? Whose title? ²¹ 'They replied, 'Caesar's,' Then he said to them, 'Very well, pay Caesar what belongs to Caesar-and God what belongs to God.'

Gospel Focus

The Pharisee's question for Jesus in today's gospel reading is a clear trap. If he responds against the tax, he stands in opposition to the mighty Roman empire. If he responds in favor, he is a traitor to his own people. Jesus responds by calling out the test and pointing the question back to his accusers-"Who's image is this and whose inscription?" Giving his often-quoted response, Jesus answers the question with another implicit question: What is Caesar's and what is God's? In truth, all things belong to God and the obligation to God is significantly greater, as surely the Pharisees recognize. Jesus' intent here is not to give a framework for a Christian relationship between religion and the state (not that this is not an important question), but to frame this issue as a locus for individual discernment. Am I giving to God what is owed to God? Or have I made the world's various Caesars my priority.

Gospel Reflection

In today's gospel, the Pharisees and Herodians, who pose the question to Jesus about paying tax to Caesar, are not seeking guidance about a difficult moral decision. They're trying to trap Jesus with a sticky question that has no easy solution. Since the Roman occupation of Palestine in 63 BCE, Jews were obliged to a census tax, or head tax, on each man, woman, and slave. The amount was one denarius (one day's pay) per year, and was to be paid with Roman coins, which in Jesus' day bore the image of the emperor Tiberius, who reigned from 14 to 37 CE.

The attitudes of Jesus' fellow Jews toward the Romans varied as did their strategies for resistance to the occupiers. Some resigned themselves to paying their taxes in order to live in peace. Some paid the tax because they regarded the Romans as representing God's authority. Some "kissed up" to the powerful Romans by openly advocating paying the tax. Some would have said that they should pay nothing to Caesar because everything belongs to God (Lev 25:23). Some would have opposed any collusion with Rome. There were those who harbored strong nationalist sentiments and fomented armed revolt against the occupying powers. The ancient historian Josephus tells of several first-century revolutionary leaders who led unsuccessfully tax revolts.

In asking Jesus to take a stand on this thorny question, the Pharisees hope to discredit him. If he supports paying tax, then he would be seen as cooperating with the enemy, and his credibility as a prophet who preaches God's ways as opposed to Caesar's imperial ways is compromised. If he replies that the tax ought not to be paid, then he places himself at risk vis-à-vis the Romans.

Jesus finds a clever way through these two opposite choices: one should give the coin back to Caesar, since they belong to him. He then turns his focus toward "what belongs to God," which, for believers, is everything. Thus, Jesus relativizes the authority of the emperor by emphasizing God's ultimate sovereignty over all. This clever answer leaves Jesus' opponents astounded. They have no response and they depart to await another opportunity to ensnare him.

In the gospel, Jesus' interlocutors are not asking a sincere question, they are intent on undoing him. Nonetheless, the text can be an aid for contemporary Christians who genuinely seek to discern how they will relate to a government that takes actions or enacts laws that they oppose on moral grounds.

Should one withhold paying taxes, for example, such as some Christians, like Raymond Hunthausen (former archbishop of Seattle, 1975-91), have done to express their opposition to the stockpiling of nuclear weapons? Should one refuse to pay federal income tax as a way to protest war, as Dorothy Day did? Or should one pay taxes, but diligently lobby, vote, and participate in nonviolent protests as ways to communicate an oppositional stance?

Jesus' single-mindedness about the reign of God and his cleverness in turning a verbal duel into an invitation to become more deeply centered on the Holy One can help us discern our responses in our day.

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Isaiah 45:1,4-6

¹"Thus says Yahweh to his anointed one, to Cyrus whom, he says, I have grasped by his right hand, to make the nations bow before him and to disarm kings, to open gateways before him so that their gates be closed no more.

⁴It is for the sake of my servant Jacob and of Israel my chosen one, that I have called you by your name, have given you a title though you do not know me. ⁵I am Yahweh, and there is no other, there is no other God except me. Though you do not know me, I

have armed you ⁶so that it may be known from east to west that there is no one except me. I am Yahweh, and there is no other, ⁷I form the light and I create the darkness, I make well-being, and I create disasters, I, Yahweh, do all these things.

Responsorial Psalm — Psalms 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10

R: Give the Lord glory and honor.

Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all you lands.
Tell his glory among the nations; among all peoples, his wondrous deeds. (**R**)

For great is the Lord and highly to be praised; awesome is he, beyond all gods.
For all the gods of the nations are things of nought, but the Lord made the heavens. (**R**)

Give to the Lord, you families of nations, give to the Lord glory and praise;
give to the Lord the glory due his name! Bring gifts, and enter his courts. (**R**)

Worship the Lord, in holy attire; tremble before him, all the earth;
say among the nations: The Lord is king, he governs the peoples with equity. (**R**)

Second Reading — 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

¹Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the church in Thessalonica which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. ²We always thank God for you all, mentioning you in our prayers continually. ³We remember before our God and Father how active is your faith, how unsparing the love, how persevering the hope which you have from our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴We know, brothers loved by God, that you have been chosen, ⁵because our gospel came to you not only in words, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with great effect. And you observed the sort of life we lived when we were with you, which was for your sake.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

2242. The citizen is obliged in conscience not to follow the directives of civil authorities when they are contrary to the demands of the moral order, to the fundamental rights of persons or the teachings of the Gospel. *Refusing obedience* to civil authorities, when their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience, finds its justification in the distinction between serving God and serving the political community. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mt 22:21) "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29)

When citizens are under the oppression of a public authority which oversteps its competence, they should still not refuse to give or to do what is objectively demanded of them by the common good; but it is legitimate for them to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against the abuse of this authority within the limits of the natural law and the Law of the Gospel. (GS 74 # 5)

Sharing and Discussion

1. St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas noted that just as Caesar's image stamped on metal claims earthly ownership, God's image stamped on the human soul claims eternal ownership. In Catholic theology, Baptism imprints an *indelible spiritual mark* (a

character) on the soul. How does recognizing that your soul is "coined" by God alter how you view your fundamental worth and purpose?

2. Every human person—regardless of status, belief, or political view—bears the image of God. How does this passage challenge the way you treat people with whom you strongly disagree, or those on the margins of society? Why do you find it easier to see God's image in someone on the margins of society than in someone with an opposing worldview or cultural value—or vice versa??

3. A mature faith moves from giving God a "tax" (giving Him a slice of our surplus time or income) to recognizing that **100% of who we are** belongs to Him. What is one area of your life you are currently treating as "yours" that God is calling you to yield back to Him?

Closing Prayer

Facilitator: Loving God. Guide our hands and hearts as we strive to build your kingdom on earth. Give us the competence to see the pressing needs of others and the courage to act and alleviate suffering and pain. Hear the prayers we offer today and answer them according to your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Facilitator: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen

Looking to deepen your faith and connect with fellow parishioners? Join us for our "Living the Gospel" Bible study and sharing session at the parish. Together, we will reflect on God's Word, grow in faith, and journey together in fellowship.

Every Saturday

Time: 9.30 – 11.00 am

Venue: Level 3, Rm 03-06

All are welcome! For more information, please contact;

Mary Chua - 96965049 (marybay2468@gmail.com)

George Chee – 97399216 (georgejc@gmail.com)

Reflection material available on Parish Website under – (Weekly Bible Sharing - Living the Gospel)

References for the Living the Gospel Reflection:

- 1) Gospel notes taken from the Navarre Bible
- 2) Gospel reflection and Living Liturgy are taken from "Living Liturgy for Sunday and Solemnities" by Order of St Benedict. Published by Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota. Reprinted with permission.
- 3) CCC references are taken from Catechism of the Catholic Church