

Daily Reading & Meditation

Give to God What Belongs to God

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 22:15-21 SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER 2020

15 Then the Pharisees went and took counsel how to entangle him in his talk. 16 And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men. 17 Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" 18 But Jesus, aware of their malice, said,, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? 19 Show me the money for the tax." And they brought him a coin. 20 And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" 21 They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." 22 When they heard it, they marvelled; and they left him and went away.

Meditation: What do we owe God and our neighbour? Scripture tells us to give to everyone whatever is their due and to "owe no one anything, except to love one another" (Romans 13:6-8). The Jewish authorities sought to trap Jesus in a religious-state issue. The Jews resented their foreign rulers and despised paying taxes to Caesar. They posed a dilemma to test Jesus to see if he was loyal to them and to their understanding of religion. If Jesus answered that it was lawful to pay taxes to a pagan ruler, then he would lose credibility with the Jewish nation who would regard him as a coward and a friend of Caesar. If he said it was not lawful, then the Pharisees would have grounds to report him to the Roman authorities as a political trouble-maker and have him arrested.

Coins inscribe the owner's name and authority on them

Jesus avoided their trap by confronting them with the image of a coin. Coinage in the ancient world had significant political power. Rulers issued coins with their own image and inscription on them. In a certain sense the coin was regarded as the personal property of the ruler. Where the coin was valid the ruler held political sway over the people. Since the Jews used the Roman currency, Jesus explained that what belonged to Caesar must be given to Caesar.

We have been "stamped" with God's image and likeness

This story has another deeper meaning as well. We, too, have been stamped with God's image since we are created in his own likeness - "**God created man in his own image ..male and female he created them**" (Genesis 1:26-27). We rightfully belong not to ourselves, but to God who created us and redeemed us in the precious blood of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Paul the Apostle says that we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:1). **Do you acknowledge that your life and everything you possess belongs to God and not to yourself? And do you give to God what rightfully belongs to him?**

Daily Quote from the Early Church Fathers: *Put off the earthly image and put on the heavenly one, by Origen of Alexandria (185-254 AD)*

"Some people think that the Saviour spoke on a single level when he said, 'Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar' - that is, 'pay the tax that you owe.' Who among us disagrees about paying taxes to Caesar? The

passage therefore has a mystical and secret meaning. There are two images in humanity. One he received from God when he was made, in the beginning, as Scripture says in the book of Genesis, 'according to the image and likeness of God' (Genesis 1:27). The other image is of the earth (1 Corinthians 15:49). Man received this second image later. He was expelled from Paradise because of disobedience and sin after the 'prince of this world' (John 12:31) had tempted him with his enticements. Just as the coin, or denarius, has an image of the emperor of this world, so he who does the works of 'the ruler of the darkness' (Ephesians 6:12) bears the image of him whose works he does. Jesus commanded that that image should be handed over and thrown away from our face. He wills us to take on that image, according to which we were made from the beginning, according to God's likeness. It then happens that we give 'to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what is God's.' Jesus said, 'Show me a coin.' For 'coin,' Matthew wrote 'denarius' (Matthew 22:19). When Jesus had taken it, he said, 'Whose inscription does it have?' They answered and said, 'Caesar's.' And he said to them in turn, 'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.'

OPENING PRAYER :- Lord, because you have made me, I owe you the whole of my love.

Moreover, I owe you as much more love than myself as you are greater than I, for whom you gave yourself and to whom you promised yourself. I pray you, Lord, make me taste by love what I taste by knowledge; let me know by love what I know by understanding. I owe you more than my whole self, but I have no more, and by myself I cannot render the whole of it to you. Draw me to you, Lord, in the fullness of love. I am wholly yours by creation; make me all yours, too, in love. **Amen.**

CLOSING PRAYER :- **Mercy, Grace, Salvation.**

Father of Mercy, forgive my failings, keep me in Your Grace, and lead me in the way of salvation.

Give me strength in serving You as a follower of Christ.

May the Eucharist bring me Your Forgiveness and give me freedom to serve You all my life.

May it help me to remain faithful and give me the grace I need in Your service.

May it teach me the way to eternal life. **Amen.**