

Sunday, October 18, 2026 – Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

First Reading - Isaiah 45:1.4-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

I have taken the hand of Cyrus to subdue nations before his countenance.

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whom he has taken by his right hand
to subdue nations before him
and strip the loins of kings,
to force gateways before him
that their gates be closed no more:

It is for the sake of my servant Jacob,
of Israel my chosen one,
that I have called you by your name,
conferring a title though you do not know me.
I am the Lord, unrivalled;
there is no other God besides me.
Though you do not know me, I arm you
that men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun
that, apart from me, all is nothing.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 95:1. 3-5. 7-10. R. v.7

(R.) Give the Lord glory and honour.

Second Reading - 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

We are mindful of your faith, hope, and love.

From Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the Church in Thessalonika which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; wishing you grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We always mention you in our prayers and thank God for you all, and constantly remember before God our Father how you have shown your faith in action, worked for love and persevered through hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know, brothers, that God loves you and that you have been chosen, because when we brought the Good News to you, it came to you not only as words, but as power and as the Holy Spirit and as utter conviction..

Gospel Acclamation

Philippians 2:15. 16

Alleluia, alleluia!

Shine on the world like bright stars;

you are offering it the word of life.

Alleluia!

Gospel - Matthew 22:15-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

Give to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar and to God the things that are God's.

The Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap Jesus in what he said. And they sent their disciples to him, together with the Herodians, to say, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in an honest way, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to you. Tell us your opinion, then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied, 'You hypocrites! Why do you set this trap for me? Let me see the money you pay the tax with.' They handed him a denarius, and he said, 'Whose head is this? Whose name?' 'Caesar's' they replied. He then said to them, 'Very well, give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.'

Give to God what Belongs to God

Reflection on the Gospel-29th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

(Matthew 22:15-21)

Veronica Lawson RSM

The emergence of a common enemy is often the catalyst for sworn enemies to unite. In first century Palestine, Pharisees were the respected religious teachers of the law and Herodians represented secular Jewish power and wealth. Herodians and Pharisees despised each other on both religious and political grounds. When faced with a perceived threat to their authority, however, they united in opposition. Jesus of Nazareth becomes the threat that unites them. His teaching and healing draw the crowds and threaten their authority. They come together and try to set a trap for him. In attempting to set him up, they ironically pay him the greatest of tributes: addressing him as "teacher", they acknowledge his sincerity and admit that he teaches the way of God in accordance with the truth. They witness to his lack of concern with status and hierarchical division.

The question of these traditional enemies is intended to put Jesus in a "no win" position: "Is it lawful to pay tribute to the emperor or not?" Jesus turns the question back upon the questioners. He lets them know that he is aware of their malicious intent and asks them to produce the coin used for the tax. He thus makes the issue one of images, a sensitive issue for all Jews, rather than of tribute. The Roman denarius that they produce bears the bust of the Roman emperor and the Latin inscription, "Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus, High Priest".

Jesus' response, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God", can be interpreted in several ways. Is Jesus simply exposing their hypocrisy as bearers of images? From a Jewish perspective, everything belongs to God, the earth and all its riches. The disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians are Jews, even if the sympathies of the Herodians lean towards the

Roman occupiers. Is he telling them to pay the tax while still recognising God's prior claim? Is he telling them not to pay the tax precisely because the emperor has no claim on what belongs to God? Is he critiquing the Roman occupation or legitimizing it? Or is he saying something else? They are left to interpret his response as they wish.

One thing is clear: Jesus' words have nothing to do with the modern distinction between Church and secular state. There are good reasons for paying taxes in a secular state and for contributing financially to the life of the Church, something we may need to revisit in the light of decreased regular ecclesial participation in the Western world. It is quite anachronistic, however, to invoke this text in support of paying state taxes or of supporting the Church financially. The story is more about sincerity and truth in our relationships with each other and with the God of all truth. Sincerity and truth are the key criteria for any personal or global alliance.