

Children

For Primary School Children

Reading: Some people tried to trick Jesus with a difficult question about obedience. Jesus reminded them that obedience to God has to be first and foremost, and if they get that right they will know how best to respond to others who have authority over them.

Recognising: Can you think of a person—a parent, a grandparent or a teacher—who reminds you to make God the number 1 in your life?

Draw or write about a person who encouraged you to make God number 1 in your life.

Responding: Father, I thank You for the people who remind me to make You important in my life.

Father, I am sorry for the times when I have forgotten to make time for You.

Father, I ask for Your help to remember You in the things I say and do.

Resting: Remain silent for a few moments with the word 'God' in your heart.

Reflecting: God should always have the number 1 place in our lives.

Responsibility: **This week I will make time for God by...**

LECTIO DIVINA

Living the Word

A WEEK'S JOURNEY WITH THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Year A - 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

A companion for encountering Jesus' love in everyday life.



"...what belongs to God."

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-22

You are invited to **read** the Gospel passage slowly, attentively, respectfully and reverently as a gift of God.

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."

This reply took them by surprise, and they left him alone and went away.

Background to Gospel passage

Where does it happen?
In Jerusalem – where the Roman presence and authority were keenly contested.

When does it happen?
Provoked by Jesus' challenging parables, which portrayed them in unfavourable light, the Pharisees become increasingly intent on undermining and discrediting him.

Who is there?
The Pharisees resented the subjection of the people to Pagan Romans so they would have been against the tax.

The Herodians supported Herod (the local ruler appointed by the Romans), therefore, they would support the tax.

What happens?
The Pharisees and Herodians try to trap Jesus with the question, "Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

Jesus refuses their false choice between loyalty

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to Caesar and loyalty to God. Looking at the coin, he asks, "Whose image is this?" "Caesar's," they reply. Jesus responds, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God."

The coin bears Caesar's image, but we human beings bear the image of God. We may have responsibilities to society and others, but our deepest loyalty belongs to God.

Everything we are and have ultimately belongs to God.

Recognising Stage (Meditate)

- *Trust in the power of the Holy Spirit* ***at work within you.***
- ***Enter into the passage:*** *Where do you feel drawn? What touches you? What does it*
- *remind you of?*
- *Let the Gospel and your memories speak* ***to each other.***
- ***Notice the same loving presence of*** *Jesus at work* ***again today*** *in yourself and in others.*
- *If needed, use the following prompts to awaken such memories*

"We know that you are an honest man… not afraid of anyone, and that a person's rank means nothing to you."
Their words sound like admiration, but they are really flattery with an ulterior motive. When have you built someone up with praise, hoping to bring them down with your next question? Or when have you been at the receiving end of such flattery?

"Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God."
Jesus reminds us to put God first. From that starting point, we discern what is rightly asked of us by governments, society and others—and how we are called to respond.

Perhaps you can recall a time when your faith in God put you in conflict with public opinion or public authority.

Or perhaps you can recall an experience that brought home to you the truth that you were keeping God out of some areas of your life when, in truth, God belonged there?

What memories come back to you? Listen deeply to your own life experience.

Where was it? When was it? Who was there? What happened?

(Some might find it helpful to journal their memory.)

I remember the time when…

Gen.25:16, 'Truly God was in this place and I didn't see it,' until now!

Prayer Response

You are invited to respond in your own words, and where possible, together with some words from the passage. *Let the prayer flow from your recognition of the passage, or any part of it, in life experience. You might find it helpful to journal your prayer.*

Tell your Father how this passage and the memories it has evoked have awakened gratitude for the presence of Jesus in your life and in the world. Heavenly Father, I thank you…

The Gospel is always a call to repentance as well. Share with the Father your sorrow for the times when you, or a community you belong to, have fallen short in living this Gospel. Heavenly Father, I am sorry for...

Ask your Father for the help you need to live the Gospel more fully—in yourself, your family, community, Church and world. Heavenly Father, please give us the help we need to…



You are invited to deepen this prayer experience by resting your heart silently in God's presence and love. The quiet repetition of a word or phrase from the passage may help you on this journey to greater stillness and greater silence, e.g. "what belongs to God."

An Invitation to Reflect

From your journey with the passage in meditation and prayer, what new insight or understanding have you received about the true meaning of love or some expression of it, into what it means to be fully human, and how God's kingdom is being made present among us today?

Rest in this truth, hold it in prayer and trust that it will bear fruit in your life.

Thought for the week

When we give our hearts to the pursuit of truth, goodness and love, we discover how best to respond to the demands of this world.

Responsibility

This week I will make time for God by...