

XXIX ordinary Sunday  
Cycle A  
October 18, 2020

### **"Give to God what is God's"**

Today's Gospel is the famous story of the coin presented to Jesus and he is asked whether it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not.

The people asking the question are trying to trap Jesus. It's hard to imagine two groups more opposed to one another than the Pharisees and Herodians.. The Pharisees were devoted students of the Jewish laws, they deeply resented the fact that they were under the rule of the Roman Empire. They looked for the Messiah to come and rid them of their Roman oppressors. The Herodians, named after Herod, were less concerned about strict religious practice, tolerated the Roman occupation but wanted one of their own to rule the nation of Israel. They come together against their common enemy - Jesus. Both questioned the source of his teaching authority and conspired to publicly discredit him.

The Pharisees ask Jesus, "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar? It seems like a simple question but it is designed to trick Jesus. If Jesus says, 'Yes, it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, then Jesus would be in trouble with the majority of Jews they would consider anyone suggesting collecting taxes for the Roman as being a traitor. On the other hand, if Jesus says, 'No, it is not lawful to pay taxes to Caesar", he could be accused of starting a rebellion against Rome and he would be put to death. It does not seem Jesus has a way out.

But, let's see how Jesus responds. Jesus says to the Pharisees, "Show me the coin for the tax?" The Pharisees present Jesus a small coin. Looking at the coin, Jesus asks, "Whose likeness and inscription is on this coin? They reply, "Caesar's." Jesus then says, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and render to God the things that are God's." Jesus is not trapped by the Pharisees. He does not answer their question about paying taxes with a "yes or no" answer. Rather, Jesus answers their question with a "both/and" response. "You can give your money to Caesar but you need to give your life to God."

Jesus is asking us what our priorities are. When Jesus says, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" he is encouraging us to respect civil authorities, be good citizens, to pay our bills, work hard for the salary we receive, obey the laws, etc.. But, when Jesus says, "Give to God what is God's" He is reminding us that when God made man and woman

He made them in His image and likeness and we belong to God. If we belong to God, then we should give everything back to Him in return.

What, then, does it mean to give ourselves to God? I believe that it means to give all that we are to God, not just some parts of our lives, not just an hour on Sunday, not only on special occasions. Like the Apostles who “left everything” to follow Jesus Christ, we must detach our hold of everything and give all back to God.

‘To give to God what is God’s’ begins with how we spend our time. Do pray each morning thanking God for a brand new day? Do we include Mass and the Holy Eucharist as a way to praise God and to be nourished with His Body and Blood? Do we pray before meals thanking God for the food and drink He has given us to remain healthy and strong? Do we pray the Rosary together as a family asking the Blessed Mother to guide us to her Son? When we go to bed, do we ask the Lord to give us a restful night’s sleep?

‘To give to God what is God’s’ also involves who we share our lives with. Do I love the people in my family? My grandparents, mother and father, brothers and sisters, sons, and daughters? Do we respect our friends, neighbors, and coworkers? Do we celebrate their successes and do we help them if they are in trouble? How do we treat our bosses and coworkers? If we are students, do we listen to our teachers, and respect our fellow students?

‘To give to God what is God’s’ also involves how we speak and act. Do we respect God’s name, tell the truth, and use words and actions that help other people? Or take the Lord’s name in vain, tell lies, or use words to gossip and ruin other people’s reputation? Do we hold grudges or forgive people? Does our prideful nature hold us back from asking for forgiveness from other people and going to confession for God’s forgiveness and absolution?

The Pharisees and Herodians failed to see that everything comes from God, but we can learn from their mistake. The more we meditate on the phrase “Give back to God what is God’s” the more we will realize that when we give our lives to Him - the more peaceful and loving our lives will become in the future.