

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Readings: Isaiah 45:1, 4–6; 1 Thessalonians 1:1–5b; Matthew 22:15–21

Theme: Give to Caesar What Belongs to Caesar and to God What Belongs to God

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In today's Gospel, the Pharisees try to trap Jesus with a difficult question: "Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

If Jesus says yes, some people may accuse Him of supporting the Roman authorities. If He says no, they can report Him to the Romans. But Jesus, in His wisdom, asks them to show Him a coin and then says:

"Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God."

These words teach us three important lessons about our responsibilities, our faith, and our relationship with God.

1. God Can Work Through Unexpected People

In the first reading, God speaks about Cyrus, the king of Persia. Although Cyrus did not belong to the chosen people, God used him as an instrument to accomplish His plan and liberate His people.

This reminds us that God's ways are often different from ours. Sometimes, we expect God to work only through people who share our faith or think as we do. But God can work through anyone to accomplish His purposes.

For example, a person who does not regularly attend church may nevertheless help a poor neighbour, care for someone who is sick, or support a family in difficulty. Through such acts of kindness, that person can become an instrument of God's love.

Therefore, we should never underestimate anyone. God may be asking us, too, to become instruments of His love through simple acts of kindness, forgiveness, and service.

2. Our Faith Must Be Reflected in Our Daily Lives

Jesus says, "Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar."

As Christians, we have responsibilities not only towards God but also towards society. We must be honest citizens, respect the law, pay our taxes, protect public property, and treat others fairly.

Imagine someone who attends Mass every Sunday and prays the Rosary daily but cheats customers, deceives others, or refuses to pay workers fairly. Can we say that this person is truly living the Gospel?

We cannot separate our faith inside the church from our behaviour outside it.

Our Christianity must be visible in our workplaces, families, and relationships.

A businessperson who treats employees fairly, a student who refuses to cheat in an examination, or someone who returns a lost wallet rather than keeping the money is putting Christian values into practice.

Of course, if human laws directly contradict God's law, our ultimate duty is to God. As the apostles declare in Acts 5:29, "We must obey God rather than men."

The important question is this: Does my faith make me a more honest, responsible, and compassionate person?

3. We Belong to God

There is a deeper meaning in Jesus' answer.

When Jesus asks whose image is on the coin, they reply, "Caesar's." So Jesus tells them to give Caesar what belongs to him.

But let us ask another question: Whose image do we bear?

Genesis 1:27 tells us that God created humanity in His own image.

The coin bears Caesar's image, but we bear God's image. Therefore, our lives belong to God.

We may give our time to work, our energy to our families, and our attention to our mobile phones, but how much of ourselves do we give to God?

Sometimes we say, "I have no time to pray," yet we spend long periods watching television or scrolling through social media.

Our phones need charging, our bodies need food, and our cars need fuel. In the same way, our souls need God.

Even ten minutes of sincere prayer each day, reading the Bible, or thanking God for His blessings can help us grow in our relationship with Him.

Giving ourselves to God also means serving others. A mother caring patiently for her child, a person visiting a lonely neighbour, or someone forgiving a person who has caused pain is offering something precious to God.

St Paul, in the second reading, praises the Thessalonians for their "work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope."

Their faith was not merely something they professed; it was something they lived.

Our faith, too, must become visible through our kindness, patience, forgiveness, and generosity.

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters, today's Gospel invites us to examine our priorities.

Let us fulfil our responsibilities in society, treat others with justice, and live as honest citizens. But above all, let us remember that we belong to God, and He deserves the first place in our lives.

Perhaps today we need to give God more of our time through prayer, more of our hearts through forgiveness, or more of our talents through service.

Let us not give God merely what is left over after everything else. Let us give Him our hearts.

May our families, workplaces, and communities recognise Christ through the way we live.

Let us pray:

Lord Jesus, You have created us in the image of God. Teach us to fulfil our responsibilities faithfully, to love others generously, and to place You above everything else. Take our hearts, our talents, and our lives, that everything we do may give glory to Your holy name. Amen.