

Sermon

- ◆ **First Reading:** *Isaiah 45:1.4-6*
- ◆ **Second Reading:** *1 Thessalonians 1:1-5*
- ◆ **Gospel:** *Matthew 22: 15-21*

..”ah!, good master, you are so honest and upright, IS IT PERMISSIBLE TO PAY TAXES TO CAESAR or NOT?” take into account that 2 groups approached Jesus with that same question ;

The Pharisees had to pay their taxes to the emperor Caesar, they didn't want to but they had to or face going to prison ; the Herodians were supporters of king Herod and therefore were in favour of paying their taxes to the Roman government ; If Jesus had said “NO, don't bother paying tax to Caesar and company”, then he would have found himself in serious trouble with the Roman government of his day ; if Jesus had said “YES!, of course, by all means, we must pay our tax to the Romans”, then the Pharisees would have seen him as a collaborator with Roman rule, either answer would have got him into trouble ;

But Our Lord knew what they were up to, so he says to them “you hypocrites!, why do you set this trap for me?” ; and if you notice, he had no coins of his own, he had to ask to see a denarius with the head of Caesar on it, his answer is simple, but very well thought out

2. "GIVE BACK TO CAESAR WHAT BELONGS TO CAESAR, AND TO GOD WHAT BELONGS TO GOD"

needless to say, they all went off with something to think about!

Jesus had just challenged them on their loyalties, yes, they had taxes to pay and had to submit to Roman Imperialism, but also they had another loyalty to think about, their allegiance to God the father ; In this case(in the context of this Gospel reading), it wasn't a case of one loyalty taking precedence over the other, as in, we all have duties to the government that rules over us, we have to pay our taxes, we are expected to care for the environment or when polling day comes around, we are expected to cast our vote, adhere to the rules, stay out of trouble.....drive on the left, respect your fellow citizens and their property etc.

BUT what about that 2nd part of the answer that Jesus gave to them AND GIVE BACK TO GOD WHAT BELONGS TO GOD ..where do we go from there?

What are we bound to give back to God??, it's an interesting question !!!

3....as we are bound to give friendship in return for friendship ; as parents are bound to give love and attention to their children ; WE, as believers, are bound to give back to God the very best of ourselves in a spirit of thanksgiving ; In so doing we are bound to use our talents and everything that is life-giving and good about us ALL FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD.. .

Towards the end of March every year, we get a reminder from the Revenue commissioners to have our tax returns in order ; In like manner, some fine day God will ask you and me to render an account of what we have been given and used, spent and owned while in this mortal life ; will we be able to give back to God what belongs to God? thanksgiving!, a Faith matured!,

a purified soul!, a generous heart, a harvest of good works!, and talents well used all for His greater glory..

.....stay healthy....pray for those who are lonely and can't get out because of present restrictions....praise God if you enjoy good health.....

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