

Alleluia, alleluia! / Shine on the world like bright stars; / you are offering it the word of life. / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 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.'

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

Breaking Open the Word



THE SAVING WORD

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / A

22 OCTOBER 2023

FAITH IN ACTION

Jesus was certainly caught on the horns of a dilemma as he faced the hostile demands of his opponents in Jerusalem. The Pharisees as religious authorities had combined with the Herodians (those who supported the Roman-backed Herod) to trap him on the question of payment of taxes. Jesus' response not only unmasks their hypocrisy but demonstrates his adroitness in dealing with a particularly pointed question: 'Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.' Stated like this it all seems clear; the problem arises when we must determine what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God. What is the proper response for a Christian?

Today's readings warn us that false dichotomies are to be avoided between faith and the world. Isaiah reflects on the way Cyrus, the great ruler of Persia, is an unwitting instrument of God's will. In other words, God is at work in the world in ways that are unseen and often unnoticed. Consequently, if God is at work in the world the person of faith is called not to withdraw from the work but to transform it.

As far as Paul is concerned, the community of Thessalonica is a living example of what it means to be Christian in the world. Their faith has been expressed in actions seen in their working together in love, and persevering through hope. Living in the Roman empire they are praised for their ability to give both to Caesar and to God.

Christopher Monaghan CP

FIRST READING

Isa 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.

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 95:1, 3-5, 7-10. R. v. 7
R. Give the Lord glory and honour.

1. O sing a new song to the Lord, / sing to the Lord all the earth. / Tell among the nations his glory / and his wonders among all the peoples. **R.**

2. The Lord is great and worthy of praise, / to be feared above all gods; / the gods of the heathens are naught. / It was the Lord who made the heavens. **R.**

3. Give the Lord, you families of peoples, / give the Lord glory and power, / give the Lord the glory of his name. / Bring an offering and enter his courts. **R.**

4. Worship the Lord in his temple. / O earth, tremble before him. / Proclaim to the nations: 'God is king.' / He will judge the peoples in fairness. **R.**



SECOND READING

1 Thess 1:1-5

A reading from the first 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.

■ The word of the Lord.

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