

**TWENTY-NINTH  
SUNDAY  
IN ORDINARY TIME  
YEAR A**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

Lord, by your free gift  
you have chosen us  
to believe in you.  
Increase our believing  
and show us how to make  
your name great in the world.  
Everywhere, people search  
for truth and for love;  
may they find them in us,  
in all that we do  
and in all that we say.  
We believe  
that you listen to our prayer  
through Jesus, your Son,  
who lives with you,  
forever and ever.

**FOCUS OF THE READINGS:**

Both of our readings focus on the uniqueness of God: there is only one God!

The reading from *Isaiah*, apart from stating this reality again and again, makes its point through the pagan Cyrus. Though he is pagan, he too was named by God. There are no pagan Gods; there is only one God who acts in and through all!

The Gospel makes the distinction between Caesar, thought to be a god, and God, the only true God. The question behind "should we pay taxes to Caesar?" is really, "should we honor him?" Jesus chooses to distinguish between the state and God. The state has its rightful place (of which taxes are a part) but there is only one God—and it's not Caesar!

**FIRST READING: *Isaiah 45:1, 4-6***

*This is a reading from the prophet Isaiah.*

This is what God says to Cyrus, King of Persia:

"Because I love my chosen people of Israel,  
I have called you by your name.  
I give you a title of honor,  
even though you do not know me.  
I am God,  
and there is no other God besides me.  
I am the only God.  
Even though you do not know me,  
I give you strength.  
I do this so that people everywhere  
will know that there is no other God but me."

*The Word of the Lord.*

**RESPONSE: *Psalm 96***

RESPONSE:  
Round (1) (2) Fine

All the na-tions will praise you, and know that you are God.

VERSES: to Response

1. Give God glo - ry. Give hon-or and praise.  
2. Pro-claim sal - va - tion day af - ter day.  
3. Tell the na - tions God's won-der-ful deeds.

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

The musical notation consists of two staves in G major, common time. The first staff has lyrics: "Give to God what be - longs to God," al - le - (Fine) lu - ia, "what be - longs to God." The second staff continues the melody without lyrics.

## GOSPEL: *Matthew 22:15-21*

*This is a reading from the Gospel of Matthew.*

Some Jewish leaders, called Pharisees, wanted to trick Jesus into saying something wrong. So they went to him and said,

"Teacher, we know that you are honest and that you always teach the truth about God. We know that you are not afraid of what other people will say about you. You treat everyone the same. So tell us what you think about this: should we pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

Jesus knew they were trying to trick him, so he said,

"You phonies! Why are you trying to trick me? Show me the money you use to pay your taxes."

Jesus looked at it and said,

"Whose picture is on this money, and whose name?"

They answered,

"Caesar's."

So Jesus said,

"Well then, give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. And give to God what belongs to God."

*The Gospel of the Lord.*

## REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH CHILDREN:

You may need to explain a little of the background to today's Gospel reading. This should be kept simple not only because of their age, but also because our interest here is not in the historical political situation of the time. It will be helpful if the children know that the Jewish people lived in the Roman Empire. The leader of the empire was Caesar. The Romans believed that Caesar was a god. They worshipped him. His picture was on their money. Explain to them that this is true in many countries today as well. You might show them our coins and, if possible, some from other countries. Explain to them that when the Pharisees asked Jesus, "Should we pay taxes to Caesar?" they were trying to trick Jesus. If Jesus said, "Yes," they could say he worshipped Caesar. If he said, "No," they would tell Caesar Jesus told them not to pay taxes and Jesus would be put in jail.

- How did Jesus answer their question?
- What do you think he meant?

Help the children see that governments are necessary and they help us. You might explain that when their parents pay taxes, that money is used for schools, roads, helping the poor, people who have no jobs, elderly people who can't work anymore, parks, and so forth.

As Christians, we should help with those things. But the Pharisees wanted to know if Jesus would say Caesar was a god. Jesus' answer said that the government is good—but we worship only God.

- What do we give the government?
- How much must we obey the government (the laws?)
- What do we give to God?
- How must we obey God?

*Note: the notion that we sometimes must choose between obedience to state or God is unreal for children. Discerning the application of civil disobedience is necessary for adults but not for children of this age.*

## Twenty-Ninth Sunday of the Year

Give to God what belongs to God

### INTRODUCTION

Everything we have was given to us by God, who gives us love with unending generosity. How often do we remember to say "thank you" or to return just a little of what we have been given?

### SIGN OF THE CROSS

#### LIGHT THE CANDLES

Light the candles and read this prayer to the children:

If we keep our eyes on the light,  
we need never feel afraid.  
Jesus will walk before us,  
guiding us through life  
towards the kingdom of heaven.

### SORRY

Lord Jesus, we want to love others  
and live as you did,  
but it is not easy  
and often we make mistakes.

Help us to choose  
to do what pleases God,  
and to put things right  
if we have done wrong.

Allow the children a few moments to talk to God quietly themselves.

### GLORIA

#### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia.

Lord, help us to listen carefully  
to your word today.

Open our ears and hearts  
so that we will hear  
and understand your message.

Alleluia, alleluia.

#### GOSPEL (MATTHEW 22:15–21)

The Pharisees wanted to trick Jesus into saying something which would get him into trouble. So they went to him and said, "We know that you are

honest and are not afraid to speak the truth. Tell us then, should we give our money to the Romans or to God?"

Jesus answered, "Why do you want to trick me? Show me your money." They gave him a Roman denarius and he asked them, "Who is the person on this coin?" "Caesar," they answered.

Then Jesus said, "Give back to Caesar what belongs to him, and give to God what is God's."

### DISCUSSION

The Pharisees were jealous of Jesus because he was so popular with the people, and he often criticized the Pharisees. They were expecting him to tell the people to give their money to God and not to the Romans. The Pharisees knew that anyone who did not pay their taxes was immediately arrested and punished.

Did Jesus tell the people to stop giving their money in taxes to the Romans? Jesus answered this trick question wisely. He told the people to give back to Caesar what belonged to him, but at the same time, to give back to God what belonged to God.

If not money, what do you think Jesus wanted the people to give to God? He wanted them to return the love which God gave to them. We, too, can share everything with our heavenly father by giving him the gift of ourselves: all that we are and all that we have.

### ACTIVITY

Ask the children to think of one everyday thing which they could offer to God as a sign of their love for him. It could be tidying a room, spending time with someone, making someone smile, or saying a prayer. Ask them to draw a picture of whatever they choose and pin it on the board with the caption "We offer our lives to God."

### CREED

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Father in heaven, I give you today,  
all that I think and do and say.  
Fill me with grace and make me strong;  
with you at my side I won't go wrong.

pegs

at

Scary

ago

agony

aha

# Twenty-ninth Sunday of the Year

## Focus

A gift-wrapped box or container with a lid or a slit in the top (see *Activity*), and a collection of coins next to it.

## Introduction

Although the Jewish people hated living under Roman rule, there were many benefits that arose from Roman occupation. The taxes collected from the Jews were used to improve roads and build towns, and for many ordinary people business flourished and their standard of living improved. In today's Gospel we hear how some of the Pharisees tried to trick Jesus into speaking out against paying taxes to Caesar, the Roman Emperor.

## Gloria

## Gospel Acclamation

Light the Gospel candle and sing Acclamation 2.

## Gospel

A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew (22:15-21)  
(See page 377.)

## Reflection

### *Do people today pay taxes?*

People pay taxes today just as they did at the time of Jesus. Anyone who earns enough money is by law expected to pay taxes to the ruling government. Wealthy people have to pay more in taxes than the less well-off.

### *What does the government use the money for?*

The money paid by people in tax is used by the government for all kinds of things including education, health-care, building and maintaining roads.

### *At the time of Jesus, what was the Roman coin called and whose picture appeared on it?*

The Denarius was the coin used at the time, and it pictured the face of Caesar the Roman Emperor.

### *Give the children a selection of British coins to examine (take care with younger children!). Whose picture appears on these?*

### *How did Jesus answer the tricky question he was asked?*

He told the Pharisees that they should pay what they owed to the Roman Emperor for all the benefits which they received from his government and living under his authority. To do otherwise would be dishonest. The Pharisees had hoped to make Jesus speak out against Caesar and get him into trouble with the Roman authorities who ruled over them. Jesus made it clear that such payments to Caesar did not affect God's authority in their lives and what they owed to him.

### *What do you think Jesus meant when he said 'pay to God what belongs to God'?*

God isn't interested in money, because to him money isn't what makes a person rich. What does make a person 'rich' is their honesty, goodness, understanding and love

for God and one another. He pours his love into our lives and showers us with gifts. If we use those gifts and talents wisely and well, and offer our lives to please him, then we can give back to God a little of so much we have been given.

## Activity

Begin by reading the following passage adapted from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians (12:4-11):

'There are many different gifts, but each gift is given by the same Spirit; there are many different ways to serve, but all service is to the same God. Whatever manner of work we do, it is the same God who works in each of us. The Spirit acts in and through each person for the benefit of all. He gives a variety of different gifts to different individuals; to some he gives wisdom, to some knowledge, and to others he gives the gift of faith. Whatever gift is generously given, it is to be used lovingly for the good of one another.'

Now invite the children to spend a few quiet moments thinking about the gifts and talents that they have been given by God. Hand out slips of paper together with pencils or pens, and ask the children to write down or draw a picture of something they are good at. They can then come forward and place their 'gifts' in the box on the focal display. This box can be carried up by one of the children at the offertory procession.

## Intercessions

As brothers and sisters in one loving family, together let us pray to our heavenly Father:

For Christians everywhere who are called to do God's will.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For governments and agencies working to bring peace to our troubled world.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For people who campaign for justice and equal rights for all.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those who have turned away from God's love and lost their way.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

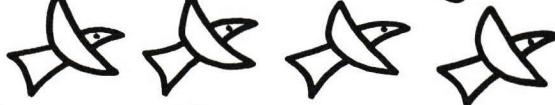
Knowing that our heavenly Father is listening, in the silence of our hearts  
let us share our own unspoken prayers with him.

*Silence*

Loving Father,  
help us to share what we have received  
through your love and generosity,  
without counting the cost of following you.  
Grant this through Christ your Son.

**Amen.**

There are many different gifts  
but each gift is given by the  
 same Spirit;

 there are many different ways  
to serve,

but all service is to the same  
 God.

The Spirit gives a variety of gifts;

to some he gives wisdom;

to some knowledge; 

to others he gives the gift of faith.

Whatever gift is generously given,  
use it lovingly for the good of  
one another.

