



ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

on

"Our mission is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ's love to our entire community through traditional Anglo-Catholic worship, fellowship, outreach, and Christian formation."

Our Vision: *"We strive to be a haven of healing, reconciliation, joy and peace in service to our wider community and beyond, so that our example in prayer and practice may reflect Christ's love for us all."*

THIS SUNDAY — October 22, 2023

“Giving to God What Is God’s.”



The passage from Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus is put to the test by Pharisees and Herodians who want to trap Him in His own words, is really well known. They ask him whether it is right to pay taxes to the Emperor.

And the reason why this passage is so well known is, unfortunately in many cases, the wrong one. “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's” has been interpreted as a compartmentalized way of worshiping, as the basis for the separation between church and state, etc.

There is nothing wrong with the separation between church and state, especially when it is understood as the church not being the power that makes political decisions for its own benefit, as it happened in the past when popes and other church prelates had more power than kings and princes.

What this separation also guarantees is that no specific denomination favored by the state is the ruling one, to the detriment of others, including people who profess a different faith, or no faith at all.

It is important to realize that these interpretations of Jesus' words come mainly from a poor understanding of the context in which they were said, and of Jesus' real intention.

First of all, for the Jewish people—and Jesus was definitely a Jew—there was no such thing as a compartmentalized life. Their faith was an essential part of their whole lives. There were no secular powers as we know them nowadays. The rulers of the social life were also the religious rulers. So the idea of worshiping God as a separate part of their lives was totally alien to Jesus.

The Romans, whose imperial power had been imposed upon the Jews in Jesus' time, had many gods, but they also believed that in some way the Emperor was divine, and erected statues of him to be worshipped by the people. The printing of the Emperor's image on coins was also a reminder that it was through his grace that people were able to acquire their basic needs, and also that his power demanded that taxes were paid back to him.

Coins with images were considered idolatrous by the Jews, so Roman coins had to be exchanged by Jewish ones to be presented as offering in the Temple. However, they were normally used to pay tribute to the Romans.

When Jesus is asked that famous question He immediately realizes He was being led to a trap, and explicitly states so to His interlocutors. He then asks them to show Him the coin used to pay taxes. There must have been a scornful tone in Jesus when asking them to show Him the coin. A coin with the Emperor's image was something to be despised, and yet Jews had to suffer using it to pay the Emperor's taxes!

The question was only about the adequacy—or not—of paying taxes to the Emperor. Even those who had more wealth among the Jews resented to have to pay such taxes, and Jesus was aware of it. But He was not going to fall into the trap of saying something that they might use against Him. His time had not come yet.

He then replies using His great wit, but adds something else—the greatest teaching that most of the readers of His words have misinterpreted or missed altogether.

He says, “give to the Emperor what is the Emperor's” (that despicable idolatrous coin that he unjustly demands as tribute). He did not utter the words I have included in parentheses, for sure, but his tone when uttering them may well have implied this.

And then He adds, “and give to God what is God's.” What did Jesus mean by that?

Was Jesus referring to another coin, to another tribute in particular, to the offerings that people put in the collection boxes in the Temple?

It is very unlikely, since the question was not about Temple offerings at all. Jesus is being a true Jew here. He believed that God had created all that exists, including human beings, and that all we had, all we ever were or attained, was always God's, and it was our duty to give it all to Him.

If the Pharisees and Herodians who asked Him the tricky question they asked Him had understood this simple truth, they would not have asked Him the question in the first place. The God who created them was the same God who created all creatures, so all His creatures are brothers and sisters and deserve to be loved as God's living images, the only true images of God that deserve true veneration—not worship, unlike the Emperor's image stamped on the coins.

Trying to harm one of God's true images is a crime, and on that particular occasion this is what these Pharisees and Herodians were trying to do. Jesus' wit prevented them from doing so at that moment, but He wanted to teach them a lesson. Reminding them that everything and everyone belongs to God was a great lesson. Unfortunately, the events that unfolded later show us that many of them dismissed Jesus' wise words.

Giving to God what is God's is so much more than putting some money on the collection plate on Sundays, or even pledging ten percent of all our income to the church. There is nothing wrong with doing this, for what we receive for our work also comes from God, but Jesus' injunction has to do with the whole of our lives, our time, our whole being, the giving out of ourselves.

Fr. Carlos

Readings for The Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 45:1-7 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10 Psalm: 96:1-9 Matthew 22:15-22

CALENDAR

Note: We continue worshipping in our historic church. The service will also be on Zoom. The service time is 10am. Tuesday Noon Mass and Friday Morning Prayer at 10:00am are held in All Saints' St. Mary Chapel

SUNDAY October 22, 2023 The Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost
10:00am Mass in All Saints' Church
Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at www.allsaintschurch.org
Recording of Mass available before noon at www.allsaintschurch.org
Christian Formation and First Communion Instruction for Children
Ages 5-12 in the Parish Hall from 10:00am-10:45am
Christian Formation Meets next in November

TUESDAY Noon Mass in St. Mary Chapel

THURSDAY Spanish Class 1:00pm to 3:00pm in the Flower Room. Taught by Fr. Carlos

FRIDAY 10:00am Morning Prayer in St. Mary Chapel

SUNDAY October 29, 2023 The Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost
10:00am Mass in All Saints' Church
Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at www.allsaintschurch.org
Recording of Mass available before noon at www.allsaintschurch.org
Christian Formation and First Communion Instruction for Children
Ages 5-12 in the Parish Hall from 10:00am-10:45am

OUR CORE VALUES:

- Welcoming strangers like old friends
- Embracing the Anglo-Catholic tradition
- Being dependable members of a caring community
- Respecting each other's differences
- Being faithful stewards of God's gift
- Remembering that God loves everyone unconditionally

An Anglo-Catholic Parish in the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego
www.allsaintschurch.org