



29th Sunday Ord. Time Yr A

Lectio Divina

Lectio: Jesus has been contesting with the religious Authorities including the Pharisees. The Authorities have at last realized that the three parables (Mt 21:28–22:14) were speaking directly to them. Are they honestly working from the heritage that they purportedly represent? Like the one man in last Sunday's parable (Mt 22:12b), when he was caught without an excuse, the Authorities keep silence. Still, the lay group, the Pharisees, plan a trap with Herodians who were their political enemies. The Pharisees saw the payment of taxes to the occupying Romans was equal to denying God. They could discredit Jesus to the people if he supported the paying of the tax. They wanted to get the people on their side. The people were a problem for the Pharisees because they saw Jesus as a Prophet. The people were not obsessed by politics¹ as the Pharisees and the Herodians were. The people were suffering under Roman oppression. They needed salvation and this was Jesus' overriding concern.² On the other hand, the Herodians accepted Roman imperialism. If Jesus refused to pay the tax they would have Jesus arrested by the Romans. Jesus can't keep silent! But what can he say and not fall into their trap?

Read: **Matthew 22: 15 - 21**

Meditatio: Have I plotted against someone? How have I reacted when I have been 'caught out'? How do I react when people challenge my beliefs? How do I respond to 'uncomfortable truths'? Have I been complicit in discrediting an honest person? Am I an honest person? Do I let other people influence my decisions (out of fear or for personal gain)? Have I let myself be 'hoodwinked' in political matters? Do I pay my due taxes? Am I true to what I say and do, or, am I sometimes hypocritical? Can I see when people have bad or hidden motives? How good am I at judging motives of people? What motivates me? Have I ever felt trapped? Do I let my political affiliations allow me to overlook the truth or even make evil or self-serving choices? How do I use money? Do I think that religion has ever been manipulated for political outcomes? What do I think of politicians using 'spin' to obscure the truth? How do I combine my political affiliations with living my faith? What can I do to improve Australia politically for the good of all? What can I do to spread the faith in Australia? Do I separate civil and spiritual matters? Have I found that 'honesty is always the best policy'?

Oratio: Pray for honesty and clarity in all relationships. Pray for political groups. Pray that politicians will keep focused on serving the people whom they represent. Pray for cooperation between political groups for the good of their nation. Pray that people will not resort to the 'Tall Poppy Syndrome' i.e. going to any extent to bring down honest people who are a problem to them (e.g. who challenge them to reform their ways). Pray for those in authority; may they never resort to corruption or bribery. Pray that people will pay their due taxes as their part in supporting their society. Pray that legislators and tax officers will honestly apply taxes to the good of the whole society. Pray that evil ways will be seen for what they are. Pray for the right use of money. Pray for bankers. Pray for honesty in financial dealings. Pray for faithfulness to: the ways of Jesus, the ways of love, the ways of God. Pray for Church leaders; keep them faithful to the heritage they represent. Pray that we will not use politics or religion to avoid facing the call to our personal repentance.

Contemplatio – Dwell in stillness, simply aware of the boundless expanse of mercy that surrounds you.

After your prayer — Take every opportunity to be honest in all aspects of your life.

Matthew 22: 15 - 21

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.'

Notes:

1 The Pharisees "*thought that to serve God they must crush those of the opposition party. Since faith asks total obedience, people who confuse faith with political militancy, begin to justify, little by little, everything their party does, even lies and crimes*" (footnotes on Mk 12:13 of the Christian Community Bible, pastoral edn 1988). This shows how political obsession can go so terribly wrong.

2 Jesus does not prohibit political activity as long as it part of efforts for human liberation. "*God wants freedom for each of us, and for each nation the possibility to develop its culture and national life*" (ibid).