

SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER  
TRINITY 19



## Matthew 22:15-21

Today's gospel finds the authorities trying to trick Jesus. They really are clutching at straws to catch him out. The Master of course is not fooled for one moment and turns the question back on those who would entrap Him. He is not having it. This tension which is building in the Gospel story is not being driven by Jesus but rather in the vain attempts of those who refuse to recognise who He is. Jesus, in his response to his questioners, reminds us that we are all citizens of two dominions – the spiritual and the temporal. We have duties to each. Generally, these loyalties are not in conflict. However, there are nonetheless occasions when we need to speak – out of love - against neglect or inequitable behaviour by our Government, especially regarding social injustice. And of course, in this case, Jesus is pointing out to the authorities the hypocrisy of their question in that they were in collusion with the Roman authorities at the time. This is not really something which they, or indeed we, in our own way, might care to be reminded of.

When conflict arises between spiritual and temporal powers, it is wise to keep in mind St Thomas More's famous maxim, "The King's good servant, but God's first". Keeping a view always on the eternal, our life in the here and now can be guided and formed into the image of a loving God, who is revealed most fully in the persona and nature of our Master, Jesus. It is in following that example which we shall overcome most fully.

Jesus remains free and firm in face of the plots against him by the authorities who try to catch him out and find a way to silence him with a barbed question. Is it right to pay taxes to a foreign power? If Jesus says yes, He is against them, His own people. If He says no, they will report Him to the Romans and have him arrested. You can see in the text the wisdom of his answer. They too will know that they have been caught out in their own double standards.

To be a good citizen and to serve God are not in contradiction, since God works through all human systems and institutions to build the final community of love. Each of us has our part to play to help

build good relationships wherever we find ourselves. That is at the core of our mission outreach and in our open welcome.

A coin has two sides: one identifies the issuing authority; one refers to history or culture. We are made in the image of our creating loving God. We indelibly stamped with God's character and loving intention for us. We are best when we bring value to the people among whom we live as we witness to God's presence and life and share it.

Over the years many people have interpreted this reply of Jesus in different ways. Some, those hankering for revolution against an oppressive regime, some trying to bolster their conservatism, each trying to justify an action for their own situation. In many ways, and in equal measure, all of them, and none of them are correct. What they should be considering really is in case "what would Jesus Say" What would the answer of our God made man be? We need to look to the reply of He who hungered and thirsted for justice, and heard the cry of the poor. In all His preaching Jesus championed the cause of the destitute and outcast. But He sought change by peaceful means, even turning the other cheek to violence. Not running away but standing firm in witness. This is the answer we should look to carrying out in our own lives.

It is a response which is extremely far indeed from being passive. It is an answer which, when lived out to the full is one of action and justice for those who need it, for who cannot answer for themselves, for those who need us to reach out and advocate for them. In short the challenge in today's gospel is for us to stand in the shoes of the Master and act as He would in furtherance of the kingdom of God in the here and now, in the reality of our own strange times and spaces.

If will take courage are we then brave enough to take up the challenge to love?



Church open Sunday to Thursday  
1000hrs to 1200hrs for private  
prayer

Sunday Eucharist at 1000hrs,  
1100hrs and 1200hrs

Tuesday Eucharist at 1200hrs

Thursday Eucharist at 1200hrs