



## **Week Three: Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

### **Gospel of Matthew 22:15-21**

The Pharisees went off  
and plotted how they might entrap Jesus in speech.  
They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians, saying,  
"Teacher, we know that you are a truthful man  
and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.  
And you are not concerned with anyone's opinion,  
for you do not regard a person's status.  
Tell us, then, what is your opinion:  
Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?"  
Knowing their malice, Jesus said,  
"Why are you testing me, you hypocrites?  
Show me the coin that pays the census tax."  
Then they handed him the Roman coin.  
He said to them, "Whose image is this and whose inscription?"  
They replied, "Caesar's."  
At that he said to them,  
"Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar  
and to God what belongs to God."

**Reading 1: IS 45:1, 4-6**

**Reading 2: 1 THES 1:1-5B**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The most important thing you can do in life? Love God – with all your heart, soul, mind. Do this one thing – and everything else will begin to fall in place. This week's Gospel reminds us who we are, and whose we are: We belong to the God we love!

This October, our message series focuses in on The One Thing, in the context of what it means to be Created and Called to Love, our overall theme of the year, and in our breaking open of "Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home.

## LAUDATO SI' REFLECTION

That is why the Church set before the world the ideal of a “civilization of love”.

## SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS & DISCUSSION

**First Reading - IS 45:1, 4-6:** “For the sake of Jacob, my servant, of Israel, my chosen one, *I have called you by your name, giving you a title, though you knew me not.*”

**How is the call of Cyrus, a message of hope, a message of “calling”?**

**What made this calling so extraordinary is that Cyrus was a pagan king, unknowingly anointed by God to conquer the enemies of Israel and return the exiles to their homeland. When have you known God to work through a surprising source?**

**SECOND READING: 1THES 1:1-5B:** Paul expresses gratitude for the Thessalonians as they grow in faith and charity. He reminds them that their conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit.

**St. Paul uses the phrase “knowing, brothers and sisters loved by God, how you were chosen.” What do you think Paul means by “how you were chosen”? Reflect on the different means by which we are called or ‘chosen” by God.**

**GOSPEL: MT 22:15-21:** The Pharisees and the Herodians conspire to entrap Jesus, “Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor or not?” Answered one way, he would be outside of Jewish law; responding another way, in defiance of Roman law. Jesus does not play into the scheme and instead speaks truth to power: “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” They were caught in their own game.

**Consider the insiders and outsiders – those who did not know God, or came to know God, or claimed to know God – in all three readings: Cyrus the “pagan” instrument of God; the Thessalonians, witnesses of Christianity; and the Pharisees and Herodians, Jewish leaders who are exposed as hypocrites, choosing to not accept the Son of God.**

**Discuss how Scripture points us to consider what it means to “know” God.**

## LIVING THE GOSPEL - Give to God What is God's

From the first reading, we hear: "I am the LORD and there is no other, there is no God besides me." From the Gospel, Jesus looks upon the Roman coin and the inscription and says: "Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God." What belongs to God? Everything! He is the Creator, we are the created. In the end, it is about putting things in their proper order - it is about whose image is inscribed in our hearts. From the Book of Genesis, we are reminded: "So God created mankind in his own image".

1. Jesus reminds us that we are all citizens of the spiritual and the worldly, with obligations to each. How challenging is it to be, as St. Thomas More, patron saint of statesmen, said: "The King's Good Servant, but God's First".
2. Is there something in your life (habit, object, obligation, friend/peer) that you allow to rule your life more than God? We all have something – it may be small, it may be big; it may be buried, it may be obvious. This week, challenge yourself to take one step to act on that "something".
3. How does Pope Francis in *Laudato Si'* make us aware of the conflicts - and yet the need - for government and institutions coming together in building communities of love?

*Laudato Si'* - 231. **Love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political**, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world. Love for society and commitment to the common good are outstanding expressions of a charity which affects not only relationships between individuals but also "macro-relationships, social, economic and political ones".<sup>[156]</sup> **That is why the Church set before the world the ideal of a "civilization of love".**<sup>[157]</sup> Social love is the key to authentic development: "In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life – political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity".<sup>[158]</sup> In this framework, along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a "culture of care" which permeates all of society. When we feel that God is calling us to intervene with others in these social dynamics, we should realize that this too is part of our spirituality, which is an exercise of charity and, as such, matures and sanctifies us.