

**"Give to God what belongs to God"**

<b>Reading 1:</b>	Isaiah 45:1, 4-6	<b>Responsorial Psalm:</b>	Psalms 96:1, 3, 4-5, 7-8, 9-10
<b>Reading 2:</b>	1st Thessalonians 1:1-5	<b>Gospel</b>	: Matthew 22:15-21

**Gospel Reading:** *Matthew 22:15-21*

Then the Pharisees went and took counsel how to entangle him in his talk. And they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why put me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the money for the tax." And they brought him a coin. And Jesus said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said, "Caesar's." Then he said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they heard it, they marveled; and they left him and went away.

**Meditation:** Scripture tells us to give to everyone whatever is their due and to "owe no one anything, except to love one another". The Jewish authorities sought to trap Jesus in a religious-state issue. The Jews resented their foreign rulers and despised paying taxes to Caesar. They posed a dilemma to test Jesus to see if he was loyal to them and to their understanding of religion. If Jesus answered that it was lawful to pay taxes to a pagan ruler, then he would lose credibility with the Jewish nation who would regard him as a coward and a friend of Caesar. If he said it was not lawful, then the Pharisees would have grounds to report him to the Roman authorities as a political trouble-maker and have him arrested.

***Coins inscribe the owner's name and authority on them***

Jesus avoided their trap by confronting them with the image of a coin. Coinage in the ancient world had significant political power. Rulers issued coins with their own image and inscription on them. In a certain sense the coin was regarded as the personal property of the ruler. Where the coin was valid the ruler held political sway over the people. Since the Jews used the Roman currency, Jesus explained that what belonged to Caesar must be given to Caesar.

***We have been "stamped" with God's image and likeness***

This story has another deeper meaning as well. We, too, have been stamped with God's image since we are created in his own likeness - "God created man in his own image - male and female he created them". We rightfully belong not to ourselves, but to God who created us and redeemed us in the precious blood of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle says that we are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God.

**Questions for Community Faith Sharing:**

1. What do you owe God and your neighbour? What will you do to return the things that you have owed?
2. Do you acknowledge that your life and everything you possess belongs to God and not to yourself?
3. Do you give to God what rightfully belongs to him? Faith growing needs constant openness to Jesus' calls to let go and look to the treasure in heaven. Is there anything that you have difficulties to let go?

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*"Lord, because you have made me, I owe you the whole of my love; because you have redeemed me, I owe you the whole of myself; because you have promised so much, I owe you all my being. Moreover, I owe you as much more love than myself as you are greater than I, for whom you gave yourself and to whom you promised yourself. I pray you, Lord, make me taste by love what I taste by knowledge; let me know by love what I know by understanding. I owe you more than my whole self, but I have no more, and by myself I cannot render the whole of it to you. Draw me to you, Lord, in the fullness of love. I am wholly yours by creation; make me all yours, too, in love."*