

Liturgy of the Word with Children
Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
18 October 2020
Matthew 22:15-21

Catechist Background

'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's' has sometimes become an erroneous justification for the separation of church and state in our modern times, or for the notion that what you believe on a Sunday should not affect what you do the rest of the week.

For many first-century Jews, the question of paying Roman taxes was a difficult question of conscience, given that the Romans were an oppressing power, that Caesar believed himself to be a god—idolatry—and the coins carried his image—a graven image. It was easily argued that Roman taxes were directly contravened by the Torah. However, when the Pharisees enlisted the help of the Herodians, their motive was clear. The Herodians were a pro-Roman group who would have been natural enemies of the Pharisees. Given Jesus' previous lenient treatment of tax collectors, he might have been expected to support Roman taxation and thereby lose the support of Jewish nationalists. If he did not, he would have been in trouble with the Herodians and the Romans.

Despite appearing to be in a lose-lose situation, Jesus masterfully orchestrates the ensuing conversation. The whole of our lives belong to God, and should be directed towards God's glory.

Setting the Scene

For the activity below, you will need to ask the families to have ready a bowl of water. Some may have holy water at home but many won't. You will need to explain that when we come into the church we make the Sign of the Cross with holy water from the holy water font at the door, (in 'normal' times) but today, at home we are using ordinary water.

We Say Sorry

Leader: You are our King, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You are our Saviour, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You call us to you every day, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Loving God, help us to feel safe in your love and help us to know you more. Amen.

Gospel Intro

Some children may need to understand what 'taxes' are to appreciate the story today—that it is money paid to the government or rulers of a country to pay for things like libraries, schools, roads, fire stations, hospitals and things we all need together. It may be helpful to tell the children that at the time of Jesus, the Mediterranean world was ruled by the Romans. The Romans thought their king was a god, and this was a problem for the Jews who knew that there is only one true God. You may want to show a sample (or a picture) of a Roman coin to show the Caesar's picture on the front. Our money has the Queen's head on it, but this is not so controversial as she does not think she is a god. Some Jews did not even like using this money at all, to show that they did not believe Caesar was a god.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-21

Reflecting on the Reading with Children

- Why did the people ask Jesus the question about paying taxes?
- Whose image was on the coin? So who did it belong to?
- In the book of Genesis in the beginning of the Bible, it says that people are made in God's image. So whose image is on me? Whose image is on [name a child sitting next to you]? [Continue with a few more examples.]
- Who do we belong to?
- If we are to 'Give to God what belongs to God,' how do we 'give' ourselves to God?

Response

Remind the children that when they were baptised they were marked with the sign of the cross on their forehead to show that they were part of God's family. Usually when we come into the church we dip our fingers into the water at the holy water font and made the sign of the cross, reminding us of our Baptism. At the moment, because of Coronavirus, we cannot have water in the font so we are not able to do this.

Tell the children that we are going to remind ourselves of the sign that shows we belong to God. The families should have a bowl of water ready. Ask the children and their families at home to come forward one by one and dip their fingers into the water and make the sign of the cross on the forehead of each other. Signing another person can often make the action more significant as it is different to the norm.

We Believe

Relating to the Creed what you have shared with the children, ask this series of questions and invite the children to reply, 'I do.'

- Do you believe that God has created us in the image of God?
- Do you believe that Jesus came to show us what God is like?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who helps us to live out God's love?

We Pray (2)

Again, try to relate the bidding prayers to the reading by saying, 'Jesus, you were firm in doing what was right and so we also now pray...'

Leader: We pray for all Christians, that, in these difficult times, we may live our lives in a way that reflects God's image to the world. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for the leaders of all countries, that they may use taxes to do good works. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for people who don't have enough money to buy the things that they need to live. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: We pray for anybody we know who feels like they are picked on by others. Lord in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord, help us to stand up for what is right and show Jesus' love to all. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

