



Catechist Background

'Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's' has sometimes become an incorrect 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 first-century Jews, the question of paying Roman taxes was a difficult question of conscience. The Romans were an oppressive power, and Roman coins carried the image of the Roman ruler (Caesar). Coins therefore carried 'a graven image', which Jews were forbidden to make or have. It was easily argued that Roman taxes were forbidden by the Torah. However, when the Pharisees enlisted the help of the Herodians, their motive was clear. The Herodians were a pro-Roman Jewish group who would have been the Pharisees' natural enemies. Given Jesus' previous lenient treatment of tax collectors, he might have been expected to support 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 orchestrated the ensuing conversation. Our whole life belongs to God, and so all of it should be directed towards God's glory.

Setting the Scene

For the activity below, you will need to have a bowl of water and a towel.

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 to know you more. Amen.

Gospel Intro

You may need to explain to the children what 'taxes' are: money paid by everyone to the rulers of a country to pay for things everyone needs like libraries, schools, roads, fire stations, and hospitals.

You may need to remind the children that at the time of Jesus, the Romans ruled the area where Jesus lived. The Romans thought there were many gods (including some of their past rulers, who they called 'Caesar'). The Jews disagreed, and said there is only one true God. Roman coins were a problem for the Jews as the Romans, like us, put a picture of their ruler on their coins (see [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Coin_with_Augustus_\(Octavian\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Roman_Coin_with_Augustus_(Octavian).jpg)) Some Jews did not like using Roman money at all, to show that they did not like having Caesar as their ruler.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-21

Reflecting on the Gospel reading with Children

Ask:

- Why did the people ask Jesus the question about paying taxes? *[to trap him in an argument which they thought he could not win];*
- Whose image was on the coin? *[Caesar: the Roman ruler];*
- So who did it belong to? *[To Caesar, to who held the coin, or to God who made the world?]*
- In the Book of Genesis at the start of the Bible, it says that people are made in God's image. If so, whose image is on me, on you or on *[name a child sitting next to you]...? [God's image];*
- Who do we belong to? *[to God];*
- If we are to 'Give to God what belongs to God,' how do we 'give' ourselves to God? *[Follow Jesus' teaching and example]*

Response

Say:

- When you and I were baptised we were marked with the Sign of the Cross on our foreheads;
- This shows that we are part of God's family;
- Usually when we come into the church we dip our fingers into the water at the font (or stoop) and made the Sign of the Cross, to remind us of our Baptism;
- So we are going to remind ourselves today of the Sign that shows we belong to God.

Have a bowl of water ready:

- Invite the children to come forward in pairs or threes and to dip their fingers into the water;
- Then invite them to make the Sign of the Cross on each other's forehead. *[Signing another person can often make the action more significant as it is different to the norm.]*

We Believe

Relate the Creed to what you have shared with the children by asking these questions and inviting them to reply: 'I do':

- Do you believe that God 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, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying 'Jesus, you were firm in doing what was right and so we now pray...'

Leader: We pray for all Christians, that we may show God's face to the world. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for leaders of all countries, that they use taxes in good ways. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people who don't have money to buy what they need. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for anyone who feels like they are picked on by others. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, help us to do what is right and to show Jesus' love to all. We make our prayers through Christ our Lord.
All: **Amen.**