



ONE MISSION, TWO PARISHES

Saint Timothy's & Saint Luke the Evangelist
Catholic Parishes, Forest Hill & Blackburn South

Parish Office for both Parishes: 17 Stevens Road Forest Hill Vic 3133

Parish Office tel: 03 9412 8499; Presbytery tel: 03 9877 2292

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WEEKLY BULLETIN: SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER 2023

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A

BEING THE GOOD NEWS ... BY PROMOTING GOD'S HOSPITALITY



Readings this week: Ex 22:20 – 26; Ps 17; 1 Thess 1:5 – 10; Mt 22:34 - 40.

Gospel Reflection ~ Greg Sunter

Like last week's gospel, we again have an example of the Pharisees seeking to 'catch Jesus out' in his interpretation of scripture. The Pharisees were regarded as the great interpreters of the Torah – the Law. To them, ALL the commandments were vitally important, not just the Ten Commandments given to Moses with which we are perhaps most familiar, but the 613 *mitzvot* (commandments) contained within the Torah – the first five books of the Bible. These 613 *mitzvot* governed all aspects of Jewish life. For the Pharisees to ask Jesus about the 'greatest' commandment was a blatant challenge to him. Perhaps they expected Jesus to name one commandment and then they could challenge him with a whole series of 'What about ...?' questions. Jesus' answer to the Pharisees highlights their preoccupation with the particulars of the Law contained within scripture. In their over-emphasis on the details of religious observance, they have forgotten about the most basic element of faith: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. Jesus reminds them that being faithful to God isn't about following precise rules but rather it is simply about loving God. With this one sentence, Jesus undermines the power position of the Pharisees. If the Law is as simple as 'Love God', what need is there of Pharisees to interpret the details of the Law? Having pulled the rug out from under them, Jesus follows up with his reminder that the second most important commandment is to love your neighbour as yourself. This is a call to compassion and justice that Jesus practised freely but was sadly lacking in the religious authorities of his time. **Scriptural context – Quoting scripture:** The question and response that we see in this gospel passage was a common form of scholarly debate in the Jewish tradition. The Pharisees ask Jesus which of the commandments is the greatest. Jesus responds by directly quoting the commandment from the ancient scriptures. His reply, 'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind,' comes directly from Deuteronomy 6:4. Further, Jesus' follow-up, 'you must love your neighbour as yourself,' comes from Leviticus 19:18. Deuteronomy and Leviticus are two of the first five books of the Bible that make up the Jewish Torah, or Law. **Living the Gospel – Compassion:** Jesus' words call us to love our neighbour as ourselves. We are called to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. To be able to do this, we need to picture ourselves in their place – experiencing all that they are experiencing; not imposing our own values and circumstances. To see ourselves in the place of another is the key to responding with compassion. The origin of the word 'compassion' means experiencing with. If we are able to truly 'experience with' another person perhaps then we can genuinely recognise and respond to their needs. **Gospel Focus – Love your neighbour as yourself:** There is an implicit, or understood, commandment within the command to love your neighbour as yourself. That is, we must first love ourselves. Whilst to say someone 'loves themselves' is used as a criticism of a person who is a bit too vain, that is not what is intended here. If we are to love others as we love ourselves we must first be content and happy with who we are. It is only when we are comfortable with who we are that we are able to reach out to those around us with compassion.

BEING THE GOOD NEWS

Whitehorse Deanery
Eastern Region
Archdiocese of Melbourne

Rev Father Gerard

Parish Priest

Sonya O'Farrell

Part-time Parish Secretary

Wednesdays,

Thursdays & Fridays

10.00am – 2.00pm

SUNDAY MASS

ST: & SL: Saturday Vigil @ 6.00pm

Sunday ST: @ 9.00am Australian
Vietnamese – 5.00pm

& SL: @ 8.30am & 10.30am

WEEKDAY MASS & SL: ROSARY

ST: Weds. & Thurs. @ 9.15am &
7.30pm, Fri. @ 10.00am

1st Wednesday of the month
@ 10.00am Mass of Anointing.

SL: Weds. Thurs., & Fri. @ 9.30am

RECONCILIATION

SL: By Appointment please

MACS Catholic Primary School
21 Stevens Road, Vermont, 3133 Vic
Tel: (03) 9878 4188

Ms. Anne Maree Jones Principal

Email: principal@sttims.catholic.edu.au

Website: <https://sttims.catholic.edu.au/>

MACS Catholic Primary School

46 Orchard Grove,

Blackburn South Vic 3130

Tel: (03) 9877 4023

Mrs. Clare Ryan: Principal

Email: principal@slblackburnstc.catholic.edu.au

Website: slblackburnstc.catholic.edu.au

Prayer to Saint Timothy

O God, who adorned Saint Timothy with apostolic virtues, grant, through his intercession that, living justly and devoutly in this present age, we may merit to reach our heavenly homeland. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Patron Saint of stomach and intestinal disorders.

Prayer to Saint Luke the Evangelist

O St. Luke, you were chosen to reveal in preaching and writing God's love for the poor. Moved by the heavenly Spirit of Love, you detailed the life of Jesus, showing His divinity and His genuine compassion for all human beings. Help those who already glory in God's name to persevere in one heart and one mind and inspire all people that they may hear the Good News of Salvation. Amen

Patron Saint of artists, physicians, surgeons, students and butchers.

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER this weekend all who are sick, Mike Yore, Caratha McKerrow, Tony Keaney, Kathryn Holmes, Therese O'Donoghue, Stewart Davis, Trevor Stowe, Jerry Donoghue, Veronica and all those Parishioners unable to be among us this weekend. For all who have died recently especially Marie Cameron, for the victims of the earthquakes in Afghanistan, the casualties of war in Ukraine, Israel & Gaza and for those whose anniversaries occur about this time especially Pius & Irene Pereira, Rob Donohue, Gabriele Cigana, George Arulanandam, Pam Hosking, Benjamin Galam, Addie Perez, Alma Dauska, Des McCoy, Kevin Carroll, Thecla Floor, Nicholas Fernandes, Francesco Boccaccio, Maria Casano, Eloide Leonardi, Vita & Felice Boccaccio, Laura Ciritelli, Yin-Foong Kong, Catherine Choy, Cameron Coney and Dulantha Wilarachchi. May they rest in peace.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK: **Ordinary Time ~ Wednesday:** All Saints Day; **Thursday:** The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Soul's Day); **Friday:** St Martin Porres, religious; **Saturday:** St Charles Borromeo, bishop.

ST ALL SAINTS & ALL SOULS DAY MASSES: There will be a 7.30pm Vietnamese Mass on Wednesday 1st Nov. for All Saints Day and on Thursday 2nd Nov. at 7.30pm for All Souls Day. The Homily on both evenings will be in Vietnamese and English. All are welcome.

SL CHRISTMAS CARDS & 2024 COLUMBAN CALENDARS are now available from the Counter in our Church Foyer/Narthex. Your donation towards their cost can be left in the St V de P Poor Box adjacent to where they are available.

ST CHRISTMAS CARDS & 2024 COLUMBAN CALENDARS are now on sale from the Piety Stall. St. Vincent de Paul Society cards are \$3.00 for a pack of 5, Magellan Cards are \$7.00 for a pack of 10 and the 2024 Columban calendars are \$ 9.00 each.

CATHOLIC MISSIONS 2023 WORLD MISSION DAY APPEAL: Thankyou \$526 ST contribution and \$774.10 SL contribution will be dispatched this week.

CARITAS AUSTRALIA'S GAZA CRISIS APPEAL An estimated 1 million people have been displaced in Gaza with immediate food, shelter, health, and psychosocial needs. You can donate online www.caritas.org.au/gaza or phone 1800 024 413

MAGELLAN MEDIA: Pray for Peace Pope Francis: "I Invite You To Pray For Peace In The Holy Land"

MELBOURNE CATHOLICS: Celebrating marriage | Synod enters final week | Prayers for peace | The legacy of Benedict XVI

AUSSIE BREAD TAGS FOR WHEELCHAIRS: A Parishioner has suggested we collect plastic bread tags. The tags are recycled locally, raising funds to buy [wheelchairs](#) for disadvantaged people, mainly in South Africa. Your contribution can be left in the Recycle Box in our Church foyer/narthex. Please note that only plastic bread tags are accepted. A large bag of tags was dispatched this week.

A VOCATION VIEW: We must stop just putting band-aids on the wounds of society. We must tell the world that we are God's people. God loves us, and we were created to serve God and others in God.

STEWARDSHIP CORNER: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." Matthew 22:37 Do you put other "gods" before God? Is your love of money, power, status, comfort or some personal possession greater than your love for God? Do you recognize that everything you have and that everything you are is a gift from God? Putting God first in everything helps keep us from becoming a slave to our possessions and to our pride. (ST: Weekly First Collection Presbytery Envelopes: \$137; Thanksgiving Stewardship Envelopes this week: \$225; Vietnamese Donation: \$247.60; Monthly direct debits for Stewardship \$644; Monthly direct debits for Presbytery \$316; Monthly credit cards for Stewardship \$575; Monthly credit cards for Presbytery \$235 SL: Last week's Church Stewardship Envelopes: \$455; Last week's Presbytery Stewardship Envelopes: \$364; Monthly direct debits for Stewardship \$1778.50; Monthly direct debits for Presbytery \$1472.50; Monthly credit cards for Stewardship \$822.50; Monthly credit cards for Presbytery \$732.50).

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

WEEKEND PARISH MINISTRY ROSTER

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

SATURDAY 6:00 PM SL
6:00 PM ST
SUNDAY 8:30 AM SL
9:00 AM ST
10:30 AM SL
5.00PM ST

28 AND 29 OCTOBER

Olive Hammill
Rachel Greal
Peter McKeown
Mai Le & Ryan Yee
Joe Ferlazzo
Youth Group

4 AND 5 NOVEMBER

Shirley Prabha
Maria Deayton
Beryl Chelliah
A. Johny & V Vinsonclero
Marg Yore
Mai Le & Tuyet Nguyen

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

SATURDAY 6:00 PM SL
6:00 PM ST
SUNDAY 8:30 AM SL
9:00 AM ST
10:30 AM SL
5.00PM ST

28 AND 29 OCTOBER

Godfrey Thong
Peter Naughtin
Melina Barcellona
Anico Yee
Ian Holmes
Youth Group

4 AND 5 NOVEMBER

Anne Lobo
Rachel Greal
Kana Chelliah
Daphne Hickman
Margaret Gearon
Hung Dinh

SLIDE OPERATORS

SATURDAY 6:00 PM SL
6:00 PM ST
SUNDAY 8:30 AM SL
9:00 AM ST
10:30 AM SL
5.00PM ST

28 AND 29 OCTOBER

David Prabha
Michelle Chen
Megan McLean
Lee Min Yee
Manny Gonzalez
Toan Tran

4 AND 5 NOVEMBER

Choir
Michelle Chen
Melina Barcellona
Lee Min Yee
Manny Gonzalez
Toan Tran

SL WELCOMERS 28/29 OCT

6:00 PM Edna Lee
8:30 AM Marie Pekish
10:30 AM Volunteer

SL CHURCH CLEANING

11th Nov. – Megan's Team
Megan McLean, Janette Clark,
Rita Gibb & Nikhita Paul

SL CHURCH FLOWERS

28th Oct – Ellen Donoghue
4th Nov – Joan McHugh

ST CHURCH FLOWERS

Parishioners

ST COUNTERS

This week Team 2:
Raj & Violet Fonn
Next week Team 3:

SL WELCOMERS 4/5 NOV

6:00 PM Volunteer
9:30 AM Janette Clark
10:30 AM Volunteer

ST CHURCH CLEANING

11th Nov @ 2pm
Toan Tran, Dao Dinh,
Hieu Nguyen & Dieu Nguyen

Peter Deayton & Kelvin Chen



WHAT ARE THE POPE'S INTENTIONS FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER? For the Synod:

Oct. 4 – 29 in the Vatican We pray for the Church, that she may adopt listening and dialogue as a lifestyle at every level, and allow herself to be guided by the Holy Spirit towards the peripheries of the world.

ON THE JOURNEY THIS WEEK: On the Journey this week: Fr James Arblaster says the Gospel doesn't cancel out the Old Testament but continues its timeless message with two simple Do's. Mother Hilda has an antidote for our life's regrets. Fr Tony Percy says the decalogue given to Moses in the 10 commandments Jesus summarises as the two greatest love words: God and neighbour, and Jude Hennessy s in conversation with Dr Eammon Mathieson from the Catholic Medical Association of Australia. Plus, more great music!

THE ACU CENTRE FOR LITURGY is shortly hosting two online public lectures: On Monday **6 November 2023**, 10am AEDT via Zoom, with the topic of: "Liturgy's Imagined Futures: Beyond Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy." by renowned liturgical scholar **Professor Teresa Berger** (Yale University Institute of Sacred Music and Yale Divinity School) AND on **Sunday 3 December** at 5pm via TEAMS (and IN PERSON in Melbourne) with the topic of "A Liturgical Reform in Peril? *Sacrosanctum Concilium* sixty years on" by acclaimed liturgical historian and theologian **Rev Professor John F. Baldovin SJ** (Boston College). For more information go to www.acu.edu.au/publiclecturecf or email CentreforLiturgy@acu.edu.au

2023 ADVENT PREPARATION RESOURCES:

- **The Sign: Daily Advent and Christmas Reflections 2023** - a captivating 80-page book containing spiritually rich, yet accessible, daily reflections from the beginning of Advent (3 December 2023) through to the Baptism of the Lord (8 January 2024). Order [here](#).
- **With Expectant Hearts** is a new 22-day reflection resource that can be used during Advent to help you sit with God and to trust Him to lead you forward. Each day's reflection is inspired by a short text of Scripture from the day's Gospel reading and concludes with a prayer and a thought or two to take away. Each week is introduced with a detailed look at the different parts of the Madonna of a Rose painting by Raphael, focusing on each member of the Holy Family and John the Baptist. Order [here](#).

SAFETY STATEMENT: We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children and vulnerable persons in our Church. Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish Blackburn South holds the care, safety, wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons as central and fundamental responsibilities of the Church. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

by Promoting God's Hospitality

Parish Groups & Contacts

Lectors, Registrars, Collectors,
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist,
Slide Projector Operator & Rosters

ST: Corrie Quimbo 9412 8499

SL: Margaret Gearon 0409 807 135

Baptism Preparation

ST: Mary Italiano 9412 8499

Vietnamese Community

Hoang Nguyen 0422 400 116

Andy Tran 0422 382 109

Vietnamese Youth

John Dinh 0448 977 037

Parish Collection Preparers

ST: Barry Silvester &

Michael Kawalevski

Stewardship Counters

SL: Dale Dixon - 0433 885 087

Steve Kilroe-Smith - 0404 864 232

Parish Pastoral Council

As we are one Mission now, it has been suggested that we require only one Chair?

Parishes Safeguarding Committee

Theresa Nguyen, Mary Italiano,
Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Janette Clark - 9877 2292

Fr Gerard - 9877 2292

Parish History

SL: Margaret Gearon - 0409 807 135

Whitehorse Deanery - Fr Gerard

Finance Committee

Bernard Negline

Parish Accountant

SL: Hall Hire

Sonya O'Farrell @ the
Parish Office - 9877 2292

Church Sacristan

ST: Margaret King & Hoang Nguyen

SL: Greg Grant - 0401 644 474

Church Housekeeping

ST: Margaret King 9412 8499

Church Cleaning & Flowers

SL: Megan McLean - 0419 347 693

Church Linen

SL: Beryl Kanagalinggam

Parish Garden Maintenance

ST: Des Connors, Leo Watson,

Anico Yee & Vietnamese Community

SL: Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Holy Communion to the housebound - Fr Gerard

Emmaus College School Advisory

Council Parish Rep.:

SL: Bernard O'Malley

Parish Choirs

ST: Mary Italiano & Theresa Nguyen

SL: Lina & Maria Mafi
0411 136 043

Parish & School Fete Committee

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Advisory Council

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Parents' Association

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

St Vincent de Paul Conference

For Assistance: 1800 305 330

(Freecall: Monday to Friday 10am-3pm)

Parish Contacts:

ST: John McCoy

SL: Tony Lobo &

Steve Kilroe-Smith

Raise your voices ... Entrance Antiphon: Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice; turn to the Lord and his strength; constantly seek his face.

Response to the Psalm: I love you, Lord, my strength.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! All who love me will keep my words, and my Father will love them and we will come to them. Alleluia!

Eucharistic Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, as a fragrant offering to God.

SL: 60TH ANNIVERSARY WINES FOR OUR PARISH: Please contact the Parish Office at your convenience. Bottle \$15, 2 Bottles \$25, 6 Bottles \$75, 12 Bottles \$140; (Will mix, red/white).

SL: MARGARET GEARON'S HISTORY OF THE PARISH & SCHOOL PART II is now available for @ \$15 each.



Jesus' law of love

God

your neighbour

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A



Show your love

I show love for God when I

I show love for others when I



Whenever we show kindness, love and respect for others, we are loving God.
Draw a picture of yourself doing something that shows love for God.

Fill in the missing words to complete the story.

love
second
God
answered
yourself
teacher
heart
first
test
commandment

An expert in the Jewish law tried to ____ Jesus. He asked, "_____, what is the most important _____ ?"



Jesus _____ : "Love the Lord your ____ with all your _____, soul and mind." This is the _____ and most important commandment. The _____ is like it : "_____ your neighbour as much as you love _____".





Jesus' law of love



30th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A



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SUNDAY READINGS

READ AT HOME

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

22 October 2023



Collect

Almighty ever-living God,
grant that we may always conform our will to yours
and serve your majesty in sincerity of heart.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Readings and Commentaries

In his thoroughly-researched study of the apostle Paul (Paul: A Biography, NY: HarperCollins, 2018, 110-112), scripture scholar N. T. Wright observes that in the ancient world to serve the living God was to abandon “the great pantheon of Greek and Roman gods”. And the “most obviously powerful divinity to be given up was Caesar”.

He suggests that Paul deliberately chose to journey to “key centres of Roman rule and Roman cult in the eastern Mediterranean,” such as “Ephesus, Philippi and Corinth”. “I suspect,” he writes, “that Paul was deliberately finding ways to make the point: there is one ‘Lord,’ one Kyrios, and it isn’t Caesar. The communities of those loyal to Jesus ... were marked by a confession of that loyalty that was extremely simple and extremely profound: Kyrios Iesous Christos, ‘Jesus Messiah is Lord’”.

Jesus’ reply to his adversaries was also simple and profound: “Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God”. After all this time, it still poses the uncomfortable question as to which gods we serve.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah 45:1, 4–6

Thus says the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus,
whom he has taken by his right hand
to subdue nations before him
and strip the loins of kings,
to force gateways before him
that their gates be closed no more:

It is for the sake of my servant Jacob,
of Israel my chosen one,
that I have called you by your name,
conferring a title though you do not know me.
I am the Lord, unrivalled;
there is no other God besides me.
Though you do not know me, I arm you
that men may know
from the rising to the setting of the sun
that, apart from me, all is nothing.

First Reading

The benign view of other nations that emerges in the latter parts of Isaiah reaches a high point in today's reading. The Persian emperor Cyrus is addressed as God's anointed, meaning messiah. Normally only conferred on Israel's own kings, this high title is bestowed on Cyrus as God's agent on Israel's behalf. With divine assistance he conquers Babylon and allows the exiles to return to their homeland and rebuild Jerusalem and the temple, though none of this is mentioned in the reading.

The whole point, as Isaiah makes clear, is not to exalt Cyrus as such. It's to show Cyrus and all people that the God of Israel is the supreme Lord of all. For all his success in establishing and extending the Persian empire, Cyrus is the servant of God's masterplan of salvation. Isaiah's pronouncement testifies to God's sovereign freedom in bringing this plan to fulfilment.

The reading will be obscure for those who are unfamiliar with biblical history and Isaiah's prophetic mission, but at least readers can proclaim the text with clarity. The lengthy introductory verse addresses Cyrus in honorific terms for his military achievements (all with God's help). This sets the scene for the prophetic word to be spoken that explains the divine purpose lying behind Cyrus' success. Readers will have done good work if the assembly takes God's claims to heart: "I am the Lord, unrivalled . . . apart from me, all is nothing".

Responsorial Psalm Ps 95:1, 3–5, 7–10

R. Give the Lord glory and honour.

O sing a new song to the Lord,
sing to the Lord all the earth.
Tell among the nations his glory
and his wonders among all the peoples. **R.**

The Lord is great and worthy of praise,
to be feared above all gods;
the gods of the heathens are naught.
It was the Lord who made the heavens. **R.**

Give the Lord, you families of peoples,
give the Lord glory and power,
give the Lord the glory of his name.
Bring an offering and enter his courts. **R.**

Worship the Lord in his temple,
O earth, tremble before him.
Proclaim to the nations: 'God is king,'
He will judge the peoples in fairness. **R.**

Responsorial Psalm

Isaiah's insistence on the unqualified supremacy of Israel's God is taken up and repeated in the responsorial psalm. Psalm 95/96 is a compilation of texts from other places in the Old Testament woven together in a hymn of praise. The psalmist calls on all people and the whole of creation to acclaim God as creator, king and judge. This summons is conveyed immediately by the imperative response: "Give the Lord glory and honour".

The verses insist repeatedly on this duty to praise God. All people are enjoined to "sing a new song," to "bring an offering," and to "worship the Lord in his temple". In the typical style of Hebrew poetry, the phrases echo one another with variations on this singular theme. In effect, the psalm is both a call to prayer and a confession of faith in the one true God.

The tone of the psalm is strong, wholly affirmative and faith-filled. Readers will do well if they draw the assembly into its enthusiastic spirit.

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

1:1–5

From Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, to the Church in Thessalonika which is in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; wishing you grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We always mention you in our prayers and thank God for you all, and constantly remember before God our Father how you have shown your faith in action, worked for love and persevered through hope, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We know, brothers, that God loves you and that you have been chosen, because when we brought the Good News to you, it came to you not only as words, but as power and as the Holy Spirit and as utter conviction.

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

22:15–21

The Pharisees went away to work out between them how to trap Jesus in what he said. And they sent their disciples to him, together with the Herodians, to say, 'Master, we know that you are an honest man and teach the way of God in an honest way, and that you are not afraid of anyone, because a man's rank means nothing to you. Tell us your opinion then. Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?' But Jesus was aware of their malice and replied, 'You hypocrites! Why do you set this trap for me? Let me see the money you pay the tax with.' They handed him a denarius, and he replied, 'Whose head is this? Whose name?' 'Caesar's,' they replied. He then said to them, 'Very well, give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God.'

Second Reading

In the course of the final few Sundays of the Church's year, the gospel reading will testify to the increasingly tense conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities. Before this reaches its climax in Jesus' betrayal and crucifixion, he is prompted to speak in apocalyptic terms of the turmoil of the end times. Fittingly, the end times loom large in the letter we read during these same weeks, Paul's first to the Thessalonians, perhaps the oldest writing of the New Testament. A key issue he addresses is the Thessalonians' anxiety and confusion about Christ's return in glory.

This is not at all evident from the affectionate and encouraging words with which the letter begins. In the customary style of letters in the ancient world, Paul and his co-workers commence with greetings to the community, a prayer of thanksgiving and words of affirmation. The lectionary doesn't always include the initial words of Paul's letters, so it's refreshing to see a good model of them here.

The Thessalonians are commended for their active faith, love and hope, these three virtues being mentioned together here for the first time. Paul also applauds the community's response to his proclamation of the good news. They haven't simply listened to mere words, but have allowed his message to have a dramatic effect in their lives. They have laid themselves open to the power of the Holy Spirit and become true believers.

This is a wonderfully positive text for readers to proclaim. It is filled with Paul's faith, enthusiasm and affection, and naturally lends itself to be delivered in that spirit.

Gospel

Only once in the gospels is Jesus bettered in argument. The honour for that achievement goes to an unnamed Syro-Phoenician (or Canaanite) woman, as we heard several Sundays ago (Mt 15:21-28). In contrast to her feisty fearlessness, the antagonists in today's verbal sparring are obsequious. They insincerely praise Jesus while plotting against him with malice in their hearts.

The dilemma by means of which they seek to trap Jesus is crystal clear. Either Jesus declares the Roman tax contrary to the Law of Moses, and thus falls foul of the Roman regime, or he affirms its legitimacy and loses the support of the people. Jesus neatly side-steps the trap, though in the process implicitly approving the tax.

The sting in the tail is his reminder of what lay at the heart of Israel's faith, God's claim to their unfettered allegiance: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength" (Dt 6:5). His reply is all the more powerful in view of the choice with which he himself will soon be faced – whether to drink the cup of suffering and death or not. There is much more going on here than verbal jousting and clever one-upmanship. Strangely, the lectionary text omits the verse that records the outcome of the exchange: "This reply took them by surprise, and they left him alone and went away".

Concluding Blessing

May the God of all consolation order our days in his peace
and grant us the gifts of his blessing.

Amen.

May he free us always from every distress
and confirm our hearts in his love.

Amen.

So that on this life's journey
we may be effective in good works,
rich in the gifts of hope, faith and charity,
and may come happily to eternal life.

Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Ordinary Time IV, Roman Missal p 716)



Prayer for the Synod

As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace.

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever.

Amen.





GAZA CRISIS APPEAL

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