

**THE TWENTY-NINTH WEEK IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**22 - 28 October 2023**

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- Sun.      **The Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
Oct 22    **TO GOD AND TO CAESAR**  
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- Mon.      **Monday of the 29th Week in Ordinary Time**  
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- Tues.     **Tuesday of the 29th Week in Ordinary Time**  
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*Sunday*

## **TO GOD AND TO CAESAR**

**From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis on 22 October 2017**

This Sunday's Gospel (Mt 22:15-21) presents to us a new face-to-face encounter between Jesus and his adversaries. The theme addressed is that of the tribute to Caesar: a "thorny" issue about whether or not it was lawful to pay taxes to the Roman Emperor, to whom Palestine was subject in Jesus' time. There were various positions. Thus, the question that the Pharisees posed to him — "Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" (v.17) — was meant to ensnare the Teacher. In fact, depending on how he responded, he could have been accused of being either for or against Rome.

But in this case, too, Jesus responds calmly and takes advantage of the malicious question in order to teach an important lesson, rising above the polemics and the alliance of his adversaries. He tells the Pharisees: "Show me the money for the tax". They present him a coin, and, observing the coin, Jesus asks: "Whose likeness and inscription is this?". The Pharisees can only answer: "Caesar's". Then Jesus concludes: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (cf. vv. 19-21). On the one hand, suggesting they return to the emperor what belongs to him, Jesus declares that paying tax is not an act of idolatry, but a legal obligation to the earthly authority; on the other — and it is here that Jesus presents the "thrust" of his response: recalling the primacy of God, he asks them to render to Him that which is His due as the Lord of the life and history of mankind.

The reference to Caesar's image engraved on the coin says that it is right that they feel fully — with rights and duties — citizens of the State; but symbolically it makes them think about the other image that is imprinted on every man and woman: the image of God. He is the Lord of all, and we, who were created "in his image" belong to Him first and foremost. From the question posed to him by the Pharisees, Jesus draws a more radical and vital question for each of us, a question we can ask ourselves: *to whom do I belong?* To family, to the city, to friends, to work, to politics, to the State? Yes, of course. But first and foremost — Jesus reminds us — we belong to God. This is the fundamental belonging. It is He who has given you all that you are and have. And therefore, day by day, we can and must live our life in recognition of this fundamental belonging and in heartfelt gratitude toward our Father, who creates each one of us individually, unrepeatable, but always according to the image of his beloved Son, Jesus. It is a wondrous mystery.

Christians are called to commit themselves concretely in the human and social spheres without comparing "God" and "Caesar"; comparing God and Caesar would be a fundamentalist approach. Christians are called to commit themselves concretely to earthly realities, but illuminating them with the light that comes from God. The primary entrustment to God and hope in him do not imply an escape from reality, but rather the diligent rendering to God that which belongs to him. This is why a believer looks to the future reality, that of God, so as to live earthly life to the fullest and to meet its challenges with courage.

May the Virgin Mary help us to always live in conformity with the image of God that we bear within us, inside, also offering our contribution to the building of the earthly city.

*Monday*

## **MONEY HELPS, COVETOUSNESS KILLS**

**From the Morning Meditation by Pope Francis on 21 October 2013**

Pope Francis commented on the day's Gospel passage taken from St Luke (12:13-21), in which a man asks Jesus to tell his brother to divide his inheritance with him. The Lord responds to the request with a parable about a rich man who, in the abundance of his wealth, contemplates new ways of storing up his earthly treasure, only to discover that his life would be taken from him that very night.

The parable illustrates the problems often caused by an attachment to money, the Pope said. "How many families have we seen destroyed by problems over money: brother against brother; father against sons!". He continued, "When a person is attached to money he destroys himself, he destroys his family".

However, the demonization of money is not the answer, the Bishop of Rome noted: "Money contributes greatly to many good works for the development of the human race". The real problem is a distorted use of money, attachment, and greed. Hence the Lord's warning: "Take heed and beware of all covetousness" (Lk 12:15).

The Pope explained that covetousness and the constant ambition to have more and more money "leads to idolatry" and ends in destroying "our relationships with others". It causes man to become spiritually ill by leading him into a vicious cycle in which his thoughts are consumed by money.

Covetousness is so dangerous "because it takes us down a road opposed to the one God has traced out for man". Indeed, quoting the Apostle Paul, the Pontiff said: "Jesus Christ, though he was rich made himself poor in order to enrich us". There are two roads man can take: "God's road of humility, of bending down to serve" or "the road of covetousness, which ends in idolatry".

Pope Francis noted that this is why Jesus speaks so forcefully about the attachment to money: "For example, when he tells us: 'you cannot serve two masters' or when he exhorts us 'not to worry, for the Lord knows what you need'; or again when he leads us to trustful surrender to the Father, who makes the lilies of the field grow and feeds the birds of the air".

The attitude of the rich man in the parable stands in sharp contrast to this attitude of trust in divine mercy. The rich man could only think about the abundance of grain he had harvested and the goods he had accumulated. "He could have said to himself: 'I will give this to someone else in order to help them'. Instead, covetousness ruled his thoughts and led him to say: 'I will pull down my barns and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods'".

Covetousness, the Pope added, is an attitude that conceals the ambition to attain a kind of "idolatrous divinity". The rich man's own words bear witness to this: "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry". However, the Pope noted, this is precisely when God leads him back to the reality of his utter creatureliness. "Fool! This night your soul is required of you".

"The road [of covetousness] is foolishness for it leads us away from life; it destroys human brotherhood". In contrast, the royal road the Lord paved for us "is not a path to poverty for poverty's sake" but rather "an instrument so that God might remain God and the only Lord" of our lives.

Pope Francis concluded, praying: "May the Lord's word remain in our hearts today" for "even if a man has an abundance of wealth, his life does not consist in his possessions".

*Tuesday*

## **BLESSED ARE THOSE SERVANTS WHOM THE MASTER FINDS AWAKE WHEN HE COMES**

**From the General Audience Message of Pope Francis on 11 October 2017**

Today I would like to pause on that dimension of hope that is *vigilant waiting*. The theme of vigilance is one of the guiding threads of the New Testament. Jesus preaches to his disciples: “Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the marriage feast, so that they may open to him at once when he comes and knocks” (Lk 12:35-36). ...The Gospel recommends being servants who never go to sleep until their master has returned. This world requires our responsibility, and we accept all of it, and with love. Jesus wants our existence to be laborious, that we never lower our guard, so as to welcome with gratitude and wonder each new day given to us by God. Every morning is a blank page on which a Christian begins to write with good works. We have *already* been saved by Jesus’ redemption, however, now we *await* the full manifestation of his power: when at last God will be everything to everyone (cf. 1 Cor 15:28). Nothing is more certain, in the faith of Christians than this “appointment” with the Lord, when he shall come. And when this day arrives, we Christians want to be like those servants who spent the night with their loins girded and their lamps burning: we must be ready for the salvation that comes; ready for the encounter. Have you thought about what that encounter with Jesus will be like when he comes? It will be a great joy! We must live in anticipation of this encounter!

Christians are not made for boredom; if anything, for *patience*. We know that hidden in the monotony of certain identical days is a mystery of grace. There are people who with the perseverance of their love become wells that irrigate the desert. Nothing happens in vain, and no situation in which a Christian finds himself is completely resistant to love. No night is so long as to make us forget the joy of the sunrise. And the darker the night, the closer the dawn. If we remain united with Jesus, the cold of difficult moments does not paralyze us; and if even the whole world preached against hope, if it said that the future would bring only dark clouds, a Christian knows that in that same future, there will be Christ’s return. No one knows when this will take place, but the thought that at the end of our history, there will be Merciful Jesus suffices in order to have faith and not to curse life. Everything will be saved. We will suffer; there will be moments that give rise to anger and indignation, but the sweet and powerful memory of Christ will drive away the temptation to think that this life is a mistake

God never disappoints. His will in our regard is not nebulous but is a well-defined salvific plan: God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). Therefore let us not abandon ourselves to the flow of events with pessimism, as if history were a runaway train. Resignation is not a Christian virtue.

It is not Christian to shrug one’s shoulders or bow one’s head before a seemingly inescapable destiny.

One who brings hope to the world is never a submissive person. Jesus recommends we not await him with idle hands: “Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes” (Lk 12:37). There is no peacemaker who at the end of the day has not compromised his personal peace, taking on the problems of others. A submissive person is not a peace-builder but is an idler, one who wants to be comfortable. Meanwhile, a Christian is a peacemaker when he takes risks, when he has the courage to take risks in order to bring good, the good which Jesus has given us, given us as a treasure.

Wednesday

## ON VIGILANCE

### From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis on 7 August 2016

In the text of today's Gospel, Jesus speaks to his disciples about the theme of *vigilance* with three short parables. This is important: vigilance, being alert, being vigilant in life. The first is the parable of the *servants waiting for their master to return at night*. "Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes" (v. 37): it is the beatitude of faithfully awaiting the Lord, of being ready, with an attitude of service. He presents himself each day, and knocks at the door of our heart. Those who open it will be blessed because they will have a great reward: indeed, the Lord will make himself a servant to his servants — it is a beautiful reward — in the great banquet of his Kingdom, He himself will serve them. With this parable, set at night, Jesus proposes life as a vigil of diligent expectation, which heralds the bright day of eternity. To be able to enter one must be ready, awake, and committed to serving others, from the comforting perspective that, "beyond", it will no longer be we who serve God, but He himself who will welcome us to his table. If you think about it, this already happens today each time we meet the Lord in prayer, or in serving the poor, and above all in the Eucharist, where he prepares a banquet to nourish us of his Word and of his Body.

The second parable describes *the unexpected arrival of the thief*. This fact requires vigilance; indeed, Jesus exhorts: "You also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (v. 40).

The disciple is one who awaits the Lord and his Kingdom. The Gospel clarifies this perspective with the third parable: *the steward of a house after the master's departure*. In the first scene, the steward faithfully carries out his tasks and receives compensation. In the second scene, the steward abuses his authority, and beats the servants, for which, upon the master's unexpected return, he will be punished. This scene describes a situation that is also frequent in our time: so much daily injustice, violence, and cruelty are born from the idea of behaving as masters of the lives of others. We have only one master who likes to be called not "master" but "Father". We are all servants, sinners, and children: He is the one Father.

Jesus reminds us today that the expectation of eternal beatitude does not relieve us of the duty to render the world more just and more liveable. On the contrary, this very hope of ours of possessing the eternal Kingdom impels us to work to improve the conditions of earthly life, especially of our weakest brothers and sisters. May the Virgin Mary help us not to be people and communities dulled by the present, or worse, nostalgic for the past, but striving toward the future of God, toward the encounter with him, our life and our hope.

*Thursday*

## **I CAME TO CAST FIRE UPON THE EARTH**

**From the Angelus Message of Pope Francis on 14 August 2022**

In the Gospel of today's liturgy, there is an expression of Jesus which always strikes us and challenges us. While he is walking with his disciples, he says: "I came to cast fire upon the earth, and would that it was already kindled!" (Lk 12:49). What fire is he talking about? And what is the meaning of these words for us today, this fire that Jesus brings?

As we know, Jesus came to bring the Gospel to the world, that is, the good news of God's love for each one of us. Therefore, he is telling us that the Gospel is like a fire because it is a message that, when it erupts into history, burns the old balances of living, challenges us to come out of our individualism, challenges us to overcome selfishness, challenges us to shift from the slavery of sin and death to the new life of the Risen One, of the Risen Jesus. In other words, the Gospel does not leave things as they are; when the Gospel passes, and is listened to and received, things do not stay as they are. The Gospel provokes change and invites to conversion. It does not dispense a false intimate peace but sparks a restlessness that sets us in motion and drives us to open ourselves up to God and to our brothers and sisters. It is just like fire: while it warms us with God's love, it wants to burn our selfishness, to enlighten the dark sides of life — we all have them! — to consume the false idols that enslave us.

In the wake of the Biblical prophets — think, for example, of Elijah and Jeremiah — Jesus is lit up by the fire of God's love and, to make it spread throughout the world, he expends himself personally, loving up to the end, that is, up to death, and death on the cross (cf. Phil 2:8). He is filled with the Holy Spirit, who is compared to fire, and with his light and his strength, he unveils the merciful face of God and gives fullness to those considered lost, breaks down the barriers of marginalization, heals the wounds of the body and the soul, and renews a religiosity that was reduced to external practices. This is why he is fire: he changes, he purifies.

So, what does this mean for us, for each one of us — for me, for you, for you — what does this word of Jesus, about fire, mean for us? It invites us to rekindle the flame of faith so that it does not become a secondary matter, or a means to individual well-being, which enables us to evade the challenges of life or commitment in the Church and society. Indeed, as a theologian used to say, faith in God "reassures us — but not on our level, or so as to produce a paralyzing illusion or a complacent satisfaction, but so as to enable us to act" (De Lubac, *The Discovery of God*). In short, faith is not a "lullaby" that lulls us to sleep. True faith is a fire, a living flame to keep us wakeful and active even at night!

And so, we might ask ourselves: am I passionate about the Gospel? Do I read the Gospel often? Do I carry it with me? Does the faith I profess and celebrate lead me to a blessed tranquillity or does it ignite the flame of witness in me? We can also ask ourselves this question as Church: in our communities, do the fire of the Spirit, the passion for prayer and charity, and the joy of faith burn? Or do we drag ourselves along in weariness and routine, with a downcast face, and a lament on our lips, and gossip every day? Brothers and sisters, let us examine ourselves on this so that we too can say, like Jesus: we are inflamed with the fire of God's love, and we want to spread it around the world, to take it to everyone, so that each person may discover the tenderness of the Father and experience the joy of Jesus, who enlarges the heart — and Jesus enlarges the heart! — and makes life beautiful. Let us pray to the Holy Virgin for this: may she, who welcomed the fire of the Holy Spirit, intercede for us.

*Friday*

## **CHOOSING SALVATION IN THE INNER STRUGGLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL From the Morning Meditation by Pope Francis on 25 October 2019**

During his homily for Holy Mass ... Pope Francis urged the faithful to ask God for the “light” to know what is happening within us. Commenting on the day’s Bible passage from Saint Paul’s Letter to the Romans, he spoke of the continuous inner struggle the Apostle faced among the people, the difficulty between the desire to do good and the inability to do so, pointing out that “even saints feel this inner struggle within themselves”. “It is a struggle between good and evil — but not an abstract good and an abstract evil: between the good that the Holy Spirit inspires us to do and the evil that the evil spirit inspires us to do”. It is a struggle that is within us all and if some say they do not feel this, then they “are anesthetized and do not understand what is happening”.

The Holy Father’s attention then turned to the martyrs who had “to fight to the end in order to preserve their faith” as well as saints like Saint Therese of the Child Jesus whose “hardest struggle was her final moment” because she felt that an “evil spirit” wanted to take her away from the Lord.

Pope Francis then reflected on the day’s reading from the Gospel of Luke in which Jesus tells the crowds, and at the same time all of us: “You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”. Pope Francis asked the faithful whether, as they went about their busy schedules, they asked themselves who was leading them and who inspired them to do things. Our life “is like life on the street”; we only notice what interests us. The struggle, Francis explained, “is always between grace and sin, between the Lord who wants to save us and pull us away from this temptation and the evil spirit who always throws us down” in order to defeat us. The Pope invited Christians to ask themselves if the decisions they take are from the Lord or if they are dictated by selfishness, by the devil. “It is important to recognize what is happening within ourselves”, and not to allow our souls to become like a road for everyone to trample on. And to help with this, he recommended setting aside two to three minutes before the end of the day to ask ourselves if anything important had happened within us that day: one might find some hatred, some gossip, some charity, and to reflect on who inspired them. These questions will help us figure out what is occurring within us. Sometimes, the Pope concluded, “We know what is happening in the neighborhood, in our neighbor’s home but we do not know what is happening within us”.

*Saturday*

## **CATHOLIC, BUT NOT TOO CATHOLIC**

**From the Morning Meditation of Pope Francis on 28 October 2014**

There are Christians who stop at the “reception desk” of the Church and linger at the threshold, without going in, to avoid compromising themselves. This is the approach of those who say they are “Catholic, but” not too Catholic.

On the Feast Day of the Apostles, Saints Simon and Jude, the Pontiff pointed out that “the Church causes us to reflect on her”, inviting us to consider “how the Church is” and “what the Church is”. In the Letter to the Ephesians (2:19-22), “the first thing that Paul tells us is that we are neither strangers nor sojourners: we are not passing through, in this city that is the Church, but we are fellow citizens”. Thus, “the Lord calls us to his Church with the rights of a citizen: we are not passing through, we are rooted there. Our life is there”.

And Paul “makes an icon of the building of the temple”, writing: “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone”. Exactly, “this is the Church”, the Pope confirmed. For we “are built upon the pillars of the Apostles: the cornerstone, the foundation, is Christ Jesus himself, and we are inside”.

The Pontiff then indicated that “we are also able to see” this same vision of the Church “developed a bit in the passage of the Gospel” according to Luke (6:12-19), which tells how Jesus chose the Apostles. The Evangelist “says that Jesus went into the hills to pray. And then he called these twelve, he chose them”.

In other words, “Jesus prays, Jesus calls, Jesus chooses, Jesus sends out his disciples, Jesus heals the crowd”. And “within this temple, Jesus, who is the cornerstone, does all this work: it is He who leads the Church forward in this way”. Just as Paul writes, “This Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles whom he chose”. This is confirmed by the Gospel passage, which tells that the Lord “chose from them twelve: all sinners, all”. Judas, the Bishop of Rome observed, “wasn’t the most sinful” and “I don’t know who was the most sinful”. But “poor Judas is that one who closed himself to love and this is why he became a traitor”. The fact remains that “all of the Apostles fled at the difficult moment of the Passion, and they left Jesus alone: all are sinners”. But nevertheless, Jesus himself chose them.

“We are citizens, fellow citizens of this Church”, the Pope pointed out. For this reason, “if we do not enter this temple and be part of this construction in order that the Holy Spirit may dwell in us, we are not in the Church”. We are rather, watching “from the threshold”, perhaps saying: “How beautiful, yes, this is beautiful!”. And this way, we end up being “Christians who go no further than the ‘reception desk’ of the Church. They are there, at the threshold”, with the attitude of one who thinks: “Well yes, I’m Catholic, but” not too Catholic!

According to the Pope, “Perhaps the most beautiful thing one can say about how the Church is built is the first and last word of the Gospel passage: ‘Jesus prays’, He ‘went out into the hills to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God’”.

The reality of “Jesus who prays and Jesus who heals” applies even today, for all of us. Because, the Pope emphasized, “We cannot comprehend the Church without this Jesus who prays and this Jesus who heals”. And Pope Francis then concluded his meditation by praying to the Holy Spirit, that “He enable us all to understand this Church which has power in Jesus’ prayer for us and which is capable of healing us all”.