

SUNDAY PLUS

Go out to the whole world

A Year of the Word

Tribute to Caesar?



by Fr Denis
McBride C.Ss.R.

The enemies of Jesus ask him: "Is it permissible to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" In his reply Jesus does not answer the original question, but makes an announcement which seems engagingly vague: "Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar – and to God what belongs to God."

It is tempting to interpret the reply as a teaching on temporal and religious obligations, and argue that Jesus is acknowledging the need to pay taxes to Caesar, while stressing one's primary duty to God: one must pay tribute to Caesar and God, in recognition of one's dual citizenship.

Jesus, however, does not specify the things that belong to Caesar, for Caesar does not possess anything independently of God. Jesus does not need to specify the things that

belong to God, since everything does. He is hardly arguing to two independent spheres of power and obligation, that of Caesar and that of God, with parallel sets of obligation. Since God has dominion over the whole of creation, Caesar's relative power is subservient to the ultimate power of God.

All authority and power have to be evaluated in the light of God's plan. In his reply Jesus gives a teaching: it is for the people to evaluate whether, in demanding tribute,

Caesar is reflecting the things of God. This evaluation continues in every political community. The political arena is not a territory protected from religious evaluation and criticism. If Caesar is subservient to God, then his laws are open to Christian evaluation.

Fr Denis McBride's many books, CDs and DVDs are available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk.

A silver denarius from the time of Jesus.
Photo: DrusMAX / wikimedia commons

The first step

by Stephen Davies

Baptism calls us to be missionaries: to share the greatest gift we have been given – the gift of God's love, to give of our whole lives. Simple to write, but when I think about what it means, I feel overwhelmed.

Whatever I am able to give to God, however meagre it may feel, I have to trust that God will transform it to help build the kingdom.

There are those called to give physically, moving to the remotest corners of our world to help people experience God's love. There are those called and able to give financially.

All of us are called to give of our prayers for missionaries and, more importantly, the communities they serve on World Mission Day and every day. It is one way in which we can give to God what belongs to

God. The final words from Christina Rossetti's carol spring to mind: "Yet what I can I give him – give my heart."

Stephen Davies is the Red Box Director for Missio, the Pope's own charity for overseas mission.

**Dearest Lord,
missionaries carry your
message of love to the
furthest ends of the
world. Bless them and
the people whom they
serve. Give missionaries
insight and sensitivity
when they work within
unfamiliar cultures and
languages. Amen.**

Mission needs humility

by Sr Janet Fearn
FMDM

Young, naïve, excited and ready to work miracles, I travelled to Nigeria on my first-ever mission assignment, not realising that my world was about to be unexpectedly transformed. To quote from The King and I, "When you are a teacher, by your pupils you are taught."

My first lesson? I escorted a mother who had just lost the sixth and seventh of her nine children, all due to preventable causes. On arriving in the village, she started wailing her misery – and I didn't have a single word of her language to offer any comfort. Feeling utterly helpless, I hugged her – and in so doing, realised the uselessness of our talents and qualifications

in comparison with acting with humanity in a human situation. God asks nothing more of us than that.

When I first went out on mission, I thought that I had much to give. When I left Nigeria, I knew that I had far more still to learn. Mission needs humility.

Sr Janet Fearn is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

"As far as God's love is concerned, no one is useless or insignificant. Each of us is a mission to the world, for each of us is the fruit of God's love."

Pope Francis

Today:
Isaiah 45:1, 4-6
1 Thessalonians 1:1-5
Matthew 22:15-21

Monday:
Ephesians 2:1-10
Luke 12:13-21

Tuesday:
Ephesians 2:12-22
Luke 12:35-38

Wednesday:
Ephesians 3:2-12
Luke 12:39-48

Thursday:
Ephesians 3:14-21
Luke 12:49-53

Friday:
Ephesians 4:1-6
Luke 12:54-59

Saturday:
Ephesians 4:7-16
Luke 13:1-9

Next Sunday:
Exodus 22:20-26
1 Thessalonians 1:5-10
Matthew 22:34-40