

Christ Our Hope Catholic Church

Faith In Laity Corner



Mt. 22:15-21

29th Sunday Ordinary Times

Rendering

As we slowly march our way towards the end of the church liturgical season, we ponder on what has changed from last year to this one. We have again in the United States lost count of the number of times this year, that a sense of shock and outrage has assailed us on issues placed before our eyes.

“Then the Pharisees went off and plotted*

how they might entrap him in speech. “(Mt. 22:15)

Sadly, what we see around us is the sense of ‘plotting’ and ‘entrapping’ others with words, whereby we are now appearing to be a nation of falsehoods in the most ordinary statements. Our media outlets have been infiltrated with falsehoods in blogs, tweets, emails and ‘bugs’. Yes, our country is at a threshold, of our *new age* Pharisees who are working toward destruction of the county, against proper social order, racial harmony, and an opportunity for all to have a fair chance of living in a ‘democracy.’

This crisis has not changed from the time of Christ. The Pharisees were the rich who held powerful, social influence and political clout in Israel; while maintaining an unlikely kinship to the repressive Roman emperor. They held the legal authority to identify individuals whom they felt may support an uprising among their people and in return, were allowed deep tax exemptions for themselves and the Scribes.

“They sent their disciples to him, with the Herodians” (Mt. 22:16)

The Pharisees (*Jewish law men*) who were always concerned not to *‘appear manipulative or corrupt,’* worked hard to ensure that others took the blame for their *‘dark’* deeds. So these *lawyers of the Torah* did not go for themselves they sent out junior aides or those who were their followers to confront Jesus. Interesting enough, the Pharisee’s aides took along a *‘fringe group’* called the Herodians... These were a small extreme, opposition group who believed strongly in the Kingship of Herod (*does this not sound familiar*). The Pharisees set their questions with deliberate craft and guile, to use words to enmesh Jesus in a scandal with His response, and they even used extreme flattery or better said sarcasm to make their point.

“We know that you are a truthful man and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth.” (Mt. 22:18)

It was a *‘set up’*, a *‘loaded’* question posed to Him by the two groups- the Jewish Pharisees, and the Roman Herodians.

“Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?” (Mt. 22:19)

Should we pay our income taxes or do we find a way to evade and boast that we never pay taxes? Can it be a question posed to us right now? Should the poor people be required to pay the same percentage of taxes, as the rich? A question which we can ask ourselves today, just as in the time of Jesus. He however, was ahead of their game and His response was

“Whose image is this and whose inscription?” (Mt. 22:19)

Jesus who knew the minds and hearts returned their trickery with this noteworthy response

“Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.” (Mt. 22:20)

Should we pay our taxes to the Internal Revenue Office of the United States ? *Food for thought!!* Our civil duties we should obey, yet we have to remember that there is a higher judge. We sometimes forget that what is *‘rendered’* to others is what we are really rendering to God. Let us not render to God, the All Powerful and All Knowing our deliberate lies and falsehoods.... We will be judged by what is in our hearts.

God has blessed us, let us remember those whose daily life is a challenge and long for hope to go on. Remember the plight of people Caribbean islands, southeast USA, California and Myanmar. Mary our Mother is the Queen of Peace may she bring peace to our troubled world.

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Faith in Laity Corner is a weekly review of Sunday's readings written by
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Available now on the Parish App. and webpage

<http://www.christourhopeatl.org/becoming-a-catholic/christ-our-hope-catholic-church-weekly-reflections.php>

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